

FERRARA

the Estense City

120 PAGES • 183 PICTURES • MAPS



A HISTORICAL AND ARTISTIC
GUIDE TO THE CITY AND TERRITORY

editions ITALCARDS

This guide is addressed to the visitor who does not know Ferrara and wishes to see its most distinguished monuments and works of art, but above all to understand that identity as a city which made it celebrated in artistic history.

Every ancient city in Italy traces a peculiar place and a peculiar history; for many of them an identification with episodes-symbols is even possible: Ravenna = Byzantine monuments and mosaics, Florence = S. Maria del Fiore and Renaissance, and so on; for Ferrara this «essence» corresponds, beyond the splendid architectures of the Cathedral, the Palace of Diamonds, the Castle, or the pictorial works of the «Ferrarese workshop», just to the urban fabric in its organic whole: both in the mediaeval part, centred in the characteristic Via delle Volte, and in the Renaissance part, so exciting and lazily noble.

Therefore, even at the cost of leaving out artistic episodes of not quite secondary importance, we dedicated a large space to the urban history of the forming and development of Ferrara from its remote origins beside St. George's to the apotheosis of the Este in the Ercolea Addition; a separate chapter, then, is the right homage to the «environmental» monument of the walls, grand and fascinating completion to the Estense city

The Writers

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FERRARA

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Fore word
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Foreword

What key can be offered today to the traveller who reaches Ferrara, attracted by an image, by now well consolidated in mass media, of an «intellectual» city full of literary pictorial and cinematographic echoes; steady producer of a culture with unmistakable identity.

Ferrara is not «city of silence» any longer, but a typical Italian city of middling size rich in vital functions, a well-run city which for some years has been turning its attention to a very up-to-date problem of careful recovery of its own image, through the grandiose restoration of the walls and a programme of relaunching of urban functions. If it is true that, in the prospect of future, «small is beautiful» — since it can confront and solve its problems — Ferrara is an example of this revenge which small Italian capitals are taking towards moral and material capitals.

But Ferrara is not only this: an up-to-date community capable of programming a small resurrection is also the *τοπος* (topos) of a sense of space and time that has its seat only here, among the still waters of the Castle and the bastions penetrating them, among its «level streets as large as streams leading to infinity» and its façades proportioned in uneven rhythms, contradicting any possible identification between beauty and obviousness, among its corners riveted with pilaster strips, planted there to separate space and draw attention to this exquisitely «mental» operation, and the pyramidal bases repeating even in small buildings the scarp-like foundations of the «metaphysical» castle, by now inseparable from De Chirico's image of the «Disquieting Muses».

Ferrara is a disquieting city itself in that it is rich in contradictions, «northern» as De Chirico defined it, but also warm and loving, attracted to the same extent by asceticism and refined pleasures.

In order to define the Ferrarese specificity, the character of Genius Loci in Cosmè Tura, Longhi writes of «imagination that flourishes on method and draws from it a ruthless coherence, sometimes an obsession».

Is it not the same «obsession»

which is characteristic of Rossetti: to use only forms sticking to a simple theorem demonstrated once for all, materials which stratify according to determinate and unchanging laws.

Among all the aspects of the Genius Loci of Ferrara, the one on which it is better to fix our eyes, if we want to identify the «secret» of the city, is probably what architects call «scale», the geometrical expression of a dimensional relation. The human scale triumphs in Ferrara. Doors and windows are often cut exactly following the trace of the human body that goes through an opening or appears at a window-sill. But it would be puerile to guess that this attention to the small scale results from functional concerns or financial straits.

Ferrara knows the large scale of the Palace of Diamonds, of the Palace of Ludovico il Moro, of innumerable public and private buildings, but the way to the corner balcony of the Palace of Diamonds is a tiny little door and in the palace the door leading to the balcony is much lower than the windows which circle it.

The human scale is a key which opens the low doors of Ferrara and characterizes an architecture that could be defined «of the listening silence». «My ideal — Wittgenstein wrote in his 'diverse thoughts' — is a certain coldness. A temple serving as a background for passions without interfering». The traveller may feel so much at home in Ferrara and come back with pleasure among its streets, because he feels that architecture is listening to him, because he finally finds himself in front of a city which has moulded its own language on pauses, one of the few Italian cities where the architectural «logos», the will of asserting and exalting, melts in the will of «legein» which is saying but also collecting and then, in a sense, listening. Among so many logocratic cities, here in Ferrara is a city that leaves space with its silences to that saying which for man is existing and also walking (De Chirico mentions the city of «peripatetic friendship»), talking, feeling passions and confessing them in front of a background which does not interfere and leaves us free but not alone.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Ferrara is first mentioned in documents dating to the 8th century A.D. They refer to a «ducatus ferrariae» or «duchy of Ferrara» that a certain Desiderius had pledged in 757 to Pope Stephen II. These records suggest that Ferrara was already a political and administrative reality by the Early Middle Ages. But let's look at the archaeological record, which takes us back even farther.

The earliest artifacts from the area date to the Bronze Age and were part of an inhabited site near Bondeno. The next settlement of any import was the Etruscan town at Spina, along the coast near Comacchio, which was founded in the 6th century B.C. and enjoyed a flourishing trade with Greece. In the following centuries, the area was to be ruled by the Gauls and then the Romans, who established settlements at Voghenza, Maiero and Gambulaga.

The «ducatus ferrariae» proper was founded along the main course of the Po at the point where the Primaro tributary branches off from the Volano. There is some controversy as to the original settlement that would develop into Ferrara. There are in effect two sites, and the archaeological record has been unable to establish which one was precedent.

One area lies between and near the confluence of the two branches; it was built around the Cathedral of San Giorgio, which had become the new bishopric following the decline of Voghenza. The other, the so-called «castrum bizantino» (the San Pietro district) situated on the opposite northern bank, was originally a fortified military border camp.

Thereafter, the duchy came under the rule of the Langobards first and then the Church. In 986 Pope John XV awarded it to Thebald of Canossa. The city's outstandingly favourable position — situated on a major waterway, at a natural crossroads or hub between the all-important Adriatic Sea and the Po plain, and between Romagna and the regions to the north — and hence its strategic and commercial interest, made it the object of continual disputes between the empire and the papacy.

In this climate internal struggles arose between the more powerful families, divided along traditional lines into the Ghibellines and the Guelphs. But from the conflict there also emerged trends favouring the development of local city-based autonomy.

On the instigation of the Guelph faction, the Este family entered the fray and — thanks in part to assistance from the Venetians — soon became the city's most powerful family. They therefore took control of the city, and in 1264 Obizzo II was proclaimed Lord.

For over a century the rule of the Este family was marked by internal strife and disputes with the papacy. At the end

of the fourteenth century, however, Nicolò II had the castle erected (1385) and Alberto won from Pope Boniface IX the establishment of Ferrara as a university seat (1391), providing evidence of a lasting consolidation which was to make Ferrara a lively and famous city.

Niccolò III, Leonello and Borso all supplied further lustre to the Signoria: Niccolò III by transferring the Ecumenical Council of 1438 to Ferrara, Leonello by surrounding himself with a highly cultured and refined humanistic, literary circle, and Borso by obtaining the title of Duke of Modena and Reggio from the Emperor in 1452 and that of Duke of Ferrara from the Pope in 1471.

In the meantime the city itself, the walled ring of which had already been extended to include the walls of what are now Viale Cavour and Corso Giovecca, under Ercole I (1471-1505) was further fortified in grandiose style, extended and embellished with the famous «Addizione Erculea» built by the court architect Biagio Rossetti.

Alfonso I, Ercole II and Alfonso II were less fortunate in their rule of the duchy, finally losing it in 1597, since no legitimate heir had been born.

The papacy then returned to exert its power directly over a territory that had been impoverished by the squandering pomp of the Este family, and undermined commercially by the northward shift of the main course of the Po, which benefited the Venetian merchants. There began therefore a phase of severe civil and cultural stagnation.

Ferrara became a frontier province of the powerful Papal States, the principal piece of work of the 17th century being the construction of the Fortress, demolished in 1859.

In 1796 the city came under French occupation and was later incorporated into the Cisalpine Republic, the Cispadane Republic and the Regno Italico before being reannexed by the Papal State in 1815.

With the plebiscite of 18 March 1860, the city became part of the Kingdom of Italy.

In more recent times the city was the scene of strikes organized by the labourers around the turn of the century. Particularly remembered was the strike of Ponte Albersano in 1901, which ended in clashes with the armed forces and numerous casualties. These events bear witness to the determination of the peasants who faced the land owners with a strong sense of political awareness.

Against this background the Fascists developed a strong following in Ferrara under the leadership of Cesare Balbo.

During the last war members of the Resistance fought courageously, incurring heavy losses, while the city came under bombing raids during which a number of important buildings and monuments were damaged or destroyed; after the war the citizens of Ferrara worked determinedly towards the democratic renewal of the Republic.

THE CITY CENTRE

ESTE CASTLE

Its History. The «Castello Estense» in Ferrara is the monument most closely identified with the image of the city, and has played a role either as protagonist or as witness at every stage in the city's history.

Linked above all to the fate of the Este family, which obtained in 1264 by popular acclaim the signoria of the city in the person of Obizzo d'Este, the castle remained the seat of the family's power until their departure in 1598. Thereafter the castle was inhabited by the Cardinal Legates, representatives of the papal government of which Ferrara remained a domain until 1859. Today the castle is the property and seat of the Provincial Administration, and also houses the Prefecture.

Building began on the castle in 1385 following a violent popular revolt, triggered by the burden

of taxation imposed by the Este rulers. During the uprising, the people had murdered Tommaso da Tortona, who was the Giudice dei Savi («Senior Advisor») and the tax adviser to the Marchese. The castle was designed to ensure the Este family secure protection and to constitute a centre of military power with which to control the city.

The Marchese Nicolò II commissioned the castle from the court architect Bartolino da Novara, an expert in military constructions (whose other works include the castles at Finale Emilia and Mantua). From 29 September 1385, the day that building started on the castle, it was called «Castello di San Michele».

The original plan incorporated an existing tower, that had already been fortified and surrounded by a moat. This «Torre dei Leoni», as it was named, formed part of the system of defence to the north of the city,



Castello Estense (Castle of Este): view from Corso Martiri della Libertà.

ranged along the present-day Corso Giovecca and Viale Cavour.

Three other towers were built, forming a rectangle with the first tower, which was located at the north-east of the building. The towers were joined by blocks or «corps de logis» two stories high reinforced with avant-corps to defend the entrances. The castle was topped with battlements over the corbels (projections that jut out from the wall face).

To begin with, the building was used as a barracks for soldiers. From the second half of the fifteenth century onwards, under Borso and Ercole I, the building began to be used as an extension of the Marchese's residence, situated towards the city square opposite the cathedral and linked to the castle by a covered way, later turned into a wing of the building.

Under Ercole II, duke from 1534 to 1559, the castle was transformed into a court palace, assuming the architectural form that it has today.

This transformation was en-

trusted to Girolamo da Carpi who demolished the merlons and replaced them with stone balconies. He also added another floor to the building and designed the «Loggia degli Aranci» (of the oranges) on the first floor of the «Torre dei Leoni» and the roofterraces on the towers. After his death, the work was completed by Alberto Schiatti.

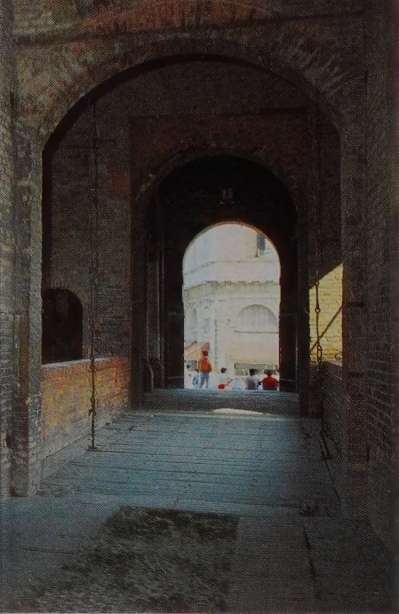
The Courtyard and the Interior. At the ground floor level one comes into the courtyard by way of the ravelins or half-moons and draw-bridges. The Renaissance-style courtyard, to the east, stands out for its eight-arch brickwork gallery supported by stone columns, and by one cornice in stone and decorated brick, to which the original construction was joined, and a second cornice made of timber.

Two stonework wells of unknown origin are situated on two of the four rain-water tubs.

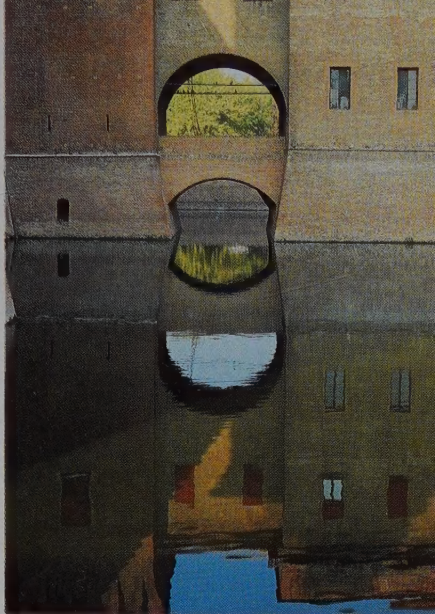
Near the «Torre dei Leoni», there are a series of rooms of considerable interest to visit.

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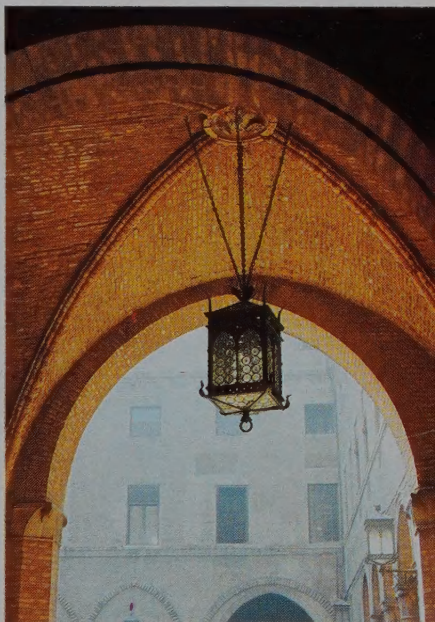
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The tower dungeons house the prisons that became famous in the events involving Ugo d'Este and Parisina Malatesta, the son and the young wife of Niccolò III, both decapitated in this castle on the charge of adultery, and Giulio and Ferrante d'Este, found guilty of plotting against their brother Alfonso I.

On the ground floor one may visit: the ravelin hall, an ancient entrance to the castle from the east, incorporated in the building following extensions made in the sixteenth century; the kitchens area, with a low vaulted ceiling and lunettes, and with the traces left by brazier stands and cleaning runnels still visible on the floor; the cordon room revealing the outside wall of the ancient «Torre dei Leoni», with the typical stone cordon mouloung now part of the building.

There are several Renaissance-era staircases leading up to the piano nobile, but the most interesting way upstairs is via the ancient so-called «cannon» ramp serving the fortified glacis. This

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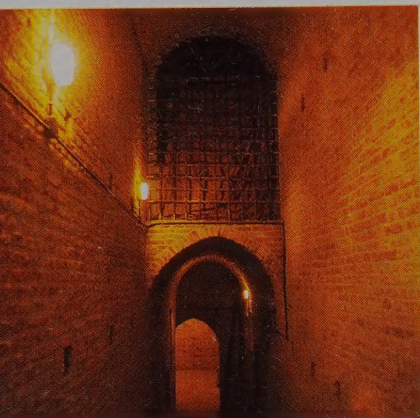


ramp now emerges on the first floor inside one of the loggie designed by Carpi.

On the first floor there is a long series of halls, all featuring painted ceilings.

These frescoes, commissioned in the second half of the sixteenth century by Duke Alfonso II, are the work of several different Ferrarese artists. Of these,

Castello Estense. 1. View from Viale Cavour; 2. Drawbridge of demilune north; 3. Moats; 4. Entrance to the courtyard from demilune north.



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the work of the Filippi family — the father Camillo, and his sons Cesare and above all Sebastiano known as «il Bastianino» — stands out.

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In the Grand Hall (Salone) and the games room, the panels, surrounded with grotesques, floral motifs, putti and imaginary animals, represent scenes of Greco-Roman inspiration depicting athletic games and exercises.

In the Sala dell'Aurora, the four phases of the day are depicted with Chronos among the Fates in the centre.

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Castello Estense. 1. Courtyard (16th c.); 2. Ramp of cannons (14th c.); 3. Parisina's dungeon; 4. Salone dei Giochi (Games Gallery), painted vault (16th c.); 5-6. Detail of the painted vault: the quadriga race and the fight.



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3 In the small Camerino dei Baccanali are scenes depicting the triumph of Bacchus, the grape-harvest, and the triumph of Ariadne.

The Chapel of Renata of France is perhaps the first example of a place of worship of the Calvinist confession, the religious persuasion espoused by the Duchess, the wife of Ercole II. Inlaid



Castello Estense. 1. *Saletta dei Giochi* (Games room): painted vault (16th c.); 2. *Sala dell'Aurora* (Dawn room): painted vault (16th c.). *Stanzino dei Baccanali* (Bacchanalia's cabinet); 3. *Ariadne's triumph*.



decorations with polychrome marble tesserae make it impossible to set up any image whatsoever: the four evangelists represented on the small vault were added in the eighteenth century.

From the hanging garden, known as the «garden of the oranges» or «of the Duchesses», overlooked by the small balcony of the conservatory (attributed

with the small wall to Girolamo da Carpi), there is an exciting view of the square, of the cathedral and of the City Hall.

Castello Estense. 1. Chapel of Renée of France (16th c.); 2. Duchesses garden.





2 CHURCH OF SAN GIULIANO

At the exit of the south ravelin of the castle stands the small church of San Giuliano. This is a reconstruction (carried out in 1405) of another church which until 1385 stood on the area on which the castle was then built, and which therefore had to be demolished.

Built by Camerlengo Galeotto degli Avogadri, ad is recorded in Latin on a small stone, the church of San Giuliano has a façade of considerable distinction both for its harmony and for the finely modelled motifs in terra cotta that decorate it. On the Gothic portal there is a high-relief representing «San Giuliano killing his parents».

1. Gardens of Piazza Castello; 2. Church S. Giuliano (15th c.); 3. Horse's head seen from the courtyard; a pag. 16-17. Partial view of the town center.



PALAZZO MUNICIPALE

The Exterior. It is but a short walk to Piazza Savonarola, with its statue to Girolamo Savonarola by Stefano Galletti (1875), and the Palazzo Municipale. On the way, we pass under the arches connecting Este Castle with the Este Palazzo, which once boasted the famous «camerini di alabastro» or the private «alabaster rooms» of Duke Alfonso I.

The Palazzo Municipale or City Hall is actually situated to the south along the street leading to the Cathedral. Once the private residence of the Estes, it features on the side facing the Piazza a Renaissance gallery, whereas the rest of its façade was rebuilt by architects Angelo and Francesco Santini in 1738, shortly after the reconstruction by architect Tommaso Mattei of Archbishop's Palace which overlooks it. The section of the Municipal Palace that faces the cathedral is a free reconstruction of the fourteenth-century façade, executed in 1924-28, together with

the Tower of Victory, housing on its ground floor Arrigo Minerbi's monument to the W.W.I victory on the Piave.

«**The Horse's Vault**». Opposite the main entrance to the cathedral is the entrance arch to the City Hall, known as the Volto del Cavallo. Alongside this vault stand the statues of Duke Borso enthroned and of Marchese Nicolò III seated astride a horse. Both statues are copies (Giacomo Zilocchi - 1927) of the originals that were destroyed by the French in 1796. The equestrian monument, commissioned by the «Magistracy of the XII Sages» to commemorate the death of the Marchese, was the work of sculptors Nicolò Baroncelli, Antonio di Cristoforo and Domenico di Paris; it was first erected in 1451. The classical Roman arch on which it stands was built by Bartolomeo di Francesco after the design attributed to Leon Battista Alberti. The other monument, originally erected in 1453, was the work of Nicolò Baroncelli.







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The Courtyard. Having passed under the arch one comes out into the Municipal Square, the ancient courtyard of the Palace. Here one should note the stone trefoil windows, the portal of the court chapel (which itself no longer stands), and the grand staircase of honour. The staircase, the work of architect Pietro Benvenuti, constructed in 1481, has a vaulted ceiling with a dome on the landing half way up, the whole structure being supported by fluted columns and large arches.

The Interior. Having climbed the staircase and entered the grand hall, one notices that the interior has undergone major transformation.

One then passes from the entrance hall into the Great Hall of the Plebiscite, where the annexation of the city of Ferrara by the Kingdom of Italy was decided in 1860. This «salone» features the outstanding work of Gaetano Previati entitled «The Horrors of War» (1894).

The only room that recalls the ducal residence is the «Stanzino delle Duchesse» (Duchesses' Chamber), constructed for Lucrezia and Eleonora D'Este between 1555 and 1560. Here one can admire a series of panels, divided by columns, resting on a wooden base; the decorations, grotesques, cupids, sirens, festoons, caryatids and divinities are attributed to Cesare, Camillo and above all Sebastiano Filippi.

Palazzo Comunale (Communal palace). 1. Courtyard: staircase of honour (15th c.) and Tower of Victory; 2. Duchesses' cabinet: detail (16th c.); 3. Archbishop's palace: façade (18th c.); 4. Cathedral.

THE CATHEDRAL

The cathedral of Ferrara dates from 1135, the year it was consecrated to Saint George.

Built in an austere Romanesque style, relieved by a pleasing symbiosis with the Gothic style, the cathedral is stylistically consistent with the most important religious buildings of that period (Cathedral of Modena, San Zeno, Verona, and others).

The new Cathedral, which eclipsed the importance of the old church of Saint George that is still found today on the south-east outskirts of the city, contributed in not small measure to the mediaeval core's expansion northward. About it there sprang up the most important public palazzi, i.e. the residence of the Marquis, the Palazzo della Ragione and the Palazzo del Podestà, and the Piazza itself became the centre of the town's commercial as well as religious and political life.

On the façade, which is divided into three sectors, the solid Romanesque style, with three entrance doors, is apparent on the lower part, up to the first balcony level.

After more than a century the round arches were used to form three-mullioned windows, with decorated rose windows, and the façade was completed with a second tier of loggias covered with other deeply splayed two-light mullioned windows. The three tympana are completed with a small-arched gallery and central rose-windows.

The tripartition of the façade is accentuated by the two pointed buttresses, while the central doorway is framed by a prothyrum (a single arch supported by two columns).

As is frequently the case with other works of that time, the cathedral's construction cannot be attributed to any single architect. The sculptural work, on





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the other hand, is attributable to Nicholaus, master of Romanesque sculpture, whose most eminent maestro was Wiligelmo. Nicholaus's name is in fact engraved on the lunette of the portal representing Saint George slaying the dragon.

On the architrave, eight panels depict scenes from the birth of Christ, while the pendentives represent the figures of Saint John the Baptist, the Lamb of God, and a young boy bearing the book of the Gospel.

The prothyrum built in the mid-thirteenth century, is supported by lions and atlantes or telamones, eighteenth-century reproductions of the originals, which are kept in the cathedral atrium.

Between the two lateral mullioned windows of the prothyrum balcony stands a Madonna and Child sculpted by Cristo-

foro da Firenze in 1427.

In the tympanum there is a representation of the Last Judgement, inspired by the Apocalypse of Saint John. By an unknown painter, this depicts at the bottom a procession of the damned on the right-hand side and of the blessed on the left-hand side, turned towards the large lateral lunettes that portray the fiery inferno and Abraham; at the apex a Christ in judgement encircled by the archangels, Saint John, and the Virgin Mary.

To the sides of the façade there are also a statue of Alberto d'Este, who in 1391 secured from Pope Boniface IX the bull for the university, and the bust of Clement VIII, who in 1598 came to Ferrara to restore the power of the Church over the city.

The north flank of the cathedral, skirting the Via degli Adelardi, preserves intact the



⁵ Romanesque scheme. Divided into eighteen portions, each one is crowned with three small arches demarcating the balcony. It originally opened at its centre; this was the door of Judgement that led into the entrance to the cemetery.

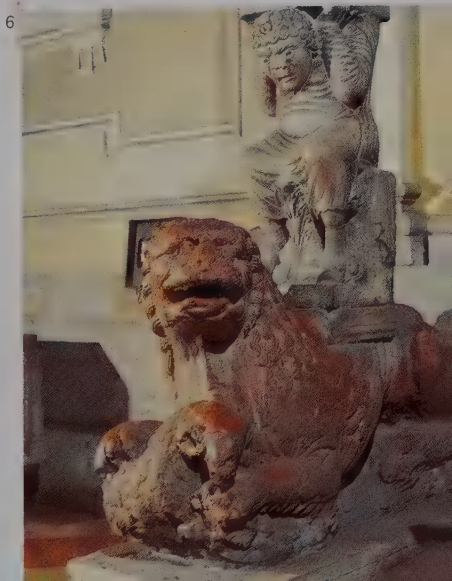
At the far end of the cathedral one can see the semicircular apse, the work of Biagio Rossetti, added in 1498. This apse has high windows and terra cotta ornamentation which embellishes the overall appearance of the building.

The south side has two sets of galleries. The lower one consists of twenty round arches supported by semicircular columns, each divided by three small ar-

ches on coupled pilasters. The upper gallery was added at a later period and takes the form of a long series of 65 small arches arranged in groups of four.

Half-way along the south side there is clear evidence of the gap left by the demolition of the porta dei Mesi in 1717 to make room for the long arcade of the loggia «of the Merchants», the con-

Cathedral. 1. Porch; 2. Entrance from the right with statue of Alberto d'Este; 3. Main Portal. In medallion, Saint George and the dragon: low relief; 4. Lion on which the porch rests; copy (19th c.); 5. Apse by Biagio Rossetti (15th c.) and Campanile by Leon Battista Alberti (15th c.); 6. Narthex: original telamon of the porch (12th c.). Next page: Cathedral from Piazza Trento e Trieste.









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struction of which had begun in the fifteenth century. The figures that decorated this door are now kept in the cathedral museum. Another door, further eastward, known as the porta dello Staio, was also demolished for the same reason.

The campanile is also situated on the same side. Building began in 1412 to a plan that has been attributed to the architect Leon Battista Alberti, but the work was never completed. The classic Roman-style campanile, of stone throughout, contains in its first cube the fifteenth-century sculptures of the four evangelists and, between the two arches, a bust of Saint Maurelio in an attitude of blessing, realized in 1466 by Matteo Castaldi.

The Interior. The interior of the cathedral is the outcome of work carried out in the eighteenth century by the architect Francesco Mazzealli. In or around 1710 he transformed the Romanesque-Gothic five-nave scheme into a nave and two

aisles, locating the atrium in the first bay.

In the atrium are preserved the original atlantes that supported the prothymum, two sarcophagi, one dating from the fifth century and the other from the fourteenth, as well as a Romanesque holy water stoup and a column-bearing calf.

In the entrance are two frescoes, removed from the demolished church of Saint Peter, painted in 1530 by Benvenuto Tisi, known as Garofalo. These depict Saint Peter and Saint Paul. The two angels bearing the holy water stoups date from 1745 and were made by the Vaccà brothers.

The most significant works in the right-hand aisle include: a Madonna delle Grazie in the first altar, a fifteenth-century work attributed to Ettore Bonacossi; in the third altar, a Madonna among the Clouds with the saints Barbara and Catherine, dating from the second half of the sixteenth century by Bastianino; in the fourth altar, a painting by



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Felice Torelli dating from 1735 and depicting the Martyrdom of Saint Maurelio, with Saint Lawrence and Saint Francis at the sides, painting on wood made in the mid-sixteenth century by Ippolito Scarsella, known as «lo Scarsellino», and a Saint Catherine worshipping the Holy Trinity, also painted on wood by Dielai at the end of the sixteenth century; in the seventh altar an altar-piece portraying the martyrdom of Saint Lawrence, a work realized in 1629 by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri from Cento, who was known as «il Guercino».

At the far end of the nave stands the monument of the Crucifix, with the bronze figures of the crucified Christ, the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist.

These works may be dated around 1450 and were executed by Nicolò and Giovanni Baroncelli, who were collaborators of Donatello. This group is complemented by the statues of the city's copratrons, Saint George and Saint Maurelio, created in 1466 by Domenico di Paris. At the base stands the neo-Renaissance funeral monument of Monsignor Ruggero Bovelli (1955).

The niches on this side of the nave and the corresponding niches on the other side contain busts in polychrome terra cotta depicting Christ and the Apostles, made by Alfonso Lombardi between 1524 and 1525 for the church of Saint Joseph in Bologna and transported to Ferrara in 1771.

In the presbytery, on the left-hand side there is the tomb of Pope Urban III, who died in Ferrara in 1187, and the bust of Pope Clement XI is on the right.

Cathedral: interior. 1. Central nave; 2. Saint Peter: Benvenuto Tisi (16th c.); 3. Saint Paul: Benvenuto Tisi (16th c.).



The 150-stall wooden choir was built at the beginning of the sixteenth century in the workshop of Daniele and Bernardino Canozzi. It is constructed in three rows in walnut, and is decorated with marquetry depicting monuments of Ferrara, deeds performed by the Este family, and liturgical objects. The bishop's seat by Luchino of France and Ludovico da Brescia was carved in 1534.

The bowl-shaped vault of the

apse contains the splendid fresco of the Last Judgement painted by «il Bastianino» between 1577 and 1580. This work was clearly inspired by the similar Last Judgement that Michelangelo had frescoed in the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

The apse stuccoes were made at the end of the sixteenth century by Agostino Rossi and Vincenzo Bagnoli.

From the far end of the left-hand aisle one can enter the



2 chapel of the Blessed Sacrament adorned with an eighteenth-century Last Supper by Giacomo Parolini.

Returning along the left-hand aisle to the first altar one encounters a Crowning of the Virgin Mary, painted on wood in the sixteenth century by Francesco Raibolini, who was known as «il Francia».

The nave's central altar, in the fourth chapel, contains a canvas that depicts the Martyrdom of Saint George, an eighteenth-century work executed by Ercole Graziani; on the right-hand side there is a depiction of the Betrothal of the Virgin Mary by Nicolò Roselli made at the end of the sixteenth-century, and on the left a Virgin Mary as Intercessor, a sixteenth century oil on wood, tentatively attributed to Benvenuto Tisi, known as «il Garofalo».

The sixth chapel features a Madonna on the Throne with Saints, the work of «il Garofalo» (1524).

In the last chapel stands a magnificent Byzantine-era octagonal baptismal font, consisting of a single piece of marble.



Cathedral: interior. 1. Chancel and apse; 2. 150 wooden stalls of the chancel (16th c.); 3. Apse. Detail of the Last Judgment: fresco by Sebastiano Filippi (16th c.).



THE CATHEDRAL MUSEUM

The cathedral museum can be reached directly from the atrium.

The museum houses many interesting works. The following rapid survey mentions the pieces of greatest artistic value.

In the museum are kept the decorative panels of the organ that Cosimo Tura, the master of the Ferrarese school, executed in 1469. These altar-pieces, arranged in pairs, depict Saint George and the Princess, with the doors open, and the Annunciation, with the doors closed.

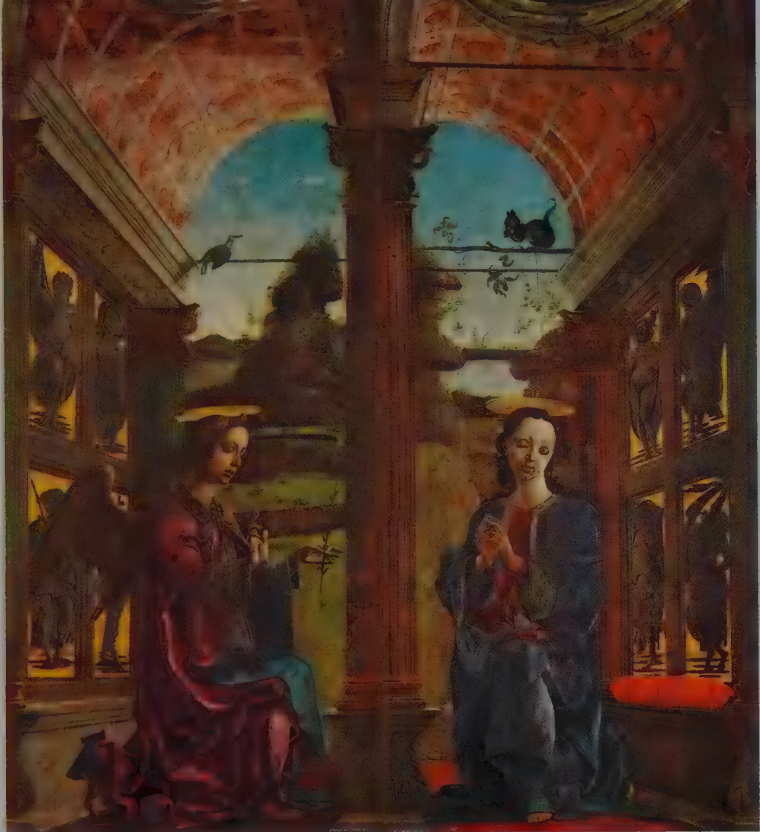
Of the sculptures, mention must be made of a Madonna del Melograno, created in 1406 by Jacopo della Quercia as well as a Saint Maurelio, made by the same sculptor in 1422.

There are also eight interesting large tapestries by the Flemish artist Johannes Karcher, made in

Ferrara between 1551 and 1553, following cartoons by Camillo Filippi.

The other lapidary works of considerable interest include the panels of the thirteenth-century pulpit; a Romanesque twelfth-century capital in the style of Anselmi, depicting Herod, Salomè and John the Baptist; and, lastly, twelve panels, depicting allegories of the months, an equestrian statue of Guglielmo degli Adelardi and a capital from the Porta dei Mesi, at the Cathedral's south entrance, decorated from 1226 onwards.

Cathedral Museum: Organ retable. 1. *Saint George and the Princess: Cosimo Tura (15th c.); 2. Annunciation: Cosimo Tura (15th c.); 3. Saint Maurelius (Bishop): Jacopo della Quercia (15th c.); 4. Madonna del Melograno: Jacopo della Quercia (15th c.).*



3 4





Cathedral Museum. 1. Acclamation of Saint Maurelius: tapestry (16th c.); 2. Illuminated Choral book: detail (15th c.); 3. Low reliefs of the Months: panel of the month of September (12th c.).





PIAZZA TRENTO E TRIESTE

Piazza Trento e Trieste is the market square built on the site where the walls that formerly encircled Ferrara were torn down in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Overlooking the square, facing the Loggia dei Merciai («Merchants' Gallery»), and alongside the cathedral, stands the Clock Tower. Originally constructed in the thirteenth century, the tower was renovated and raised in 1603 by Giovan Battista Aleotti. The modern edifice was built over the remains of the thirteenth-century Palazzo della

Ragione. Of this building, destroyed after the Second World War, there remain a number of stone pilasters. Alongside stands the modern reconstruction of the thirteenth-century Torre dei Ribelli («Tower of Rebels»). On the shorter east side of the square stands the Palazzo di San Crispino, the ancient seat of the Shoemakers' Guildhall. The façade of this building, reconstructed in the mid-nineteenth century, closes off the Renaissance gallery that may be seen to the side of Via Mazzini, at the entrance to the ancient Jewish Ghetto.



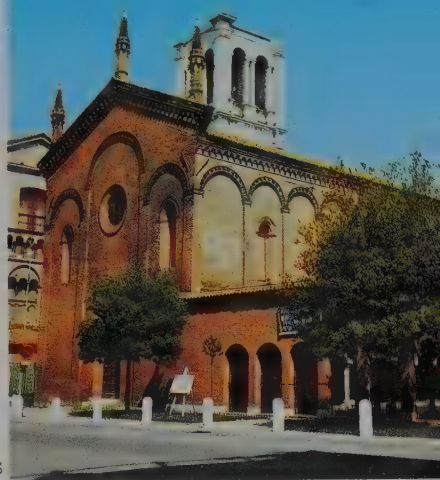
CHURCH OF SAN ROMANO

One side of this church «leans», as it were, on Piazza Trento e Trieste, and overlooks the Via di San Romano.

The original plan of the church dates back to the tenth century. Later, however, it was embellished, and the apse and small cloister were added in the eleventh century, and finally, during the fourteenth century, the church was completed, assuming its present-day form.

Both the thirteenth-century bas-relief in the lunette, depicting Saint Romanus on horseback, and the pre-Romanesque terracotta decorations in the apse are of particular interest.

The hall-shaped church interior with its one apse is linked to a small sacristy. The fresco fragments belong to a series of frescoes removed from the church and now kept in the



3

Pinacoteca Nazionale (National Picture Gallery).

The small cloister, rebuilt following damage suffered during the Second World War, has a very pleasant and harmonious appearance, thanks to the sequence of small columns dominated by original capitals, the oldest of which are tenth-century.

Piazza Trento-Trieste. 1. View from the north side: the Cathedral; 2. View from the south side: edifice rebuilt on the foundations of the Palace of Reason; 3. Church of S. Romano; 4. Cloister of S. Romano.



THE MEDIAEVAL CITY

The old centre of Ferrara with its many monuments and buildings of historical interest — that is, the part of the city enclosed within the Renaissance walls — is clearly divisible into two distinct parts dating from different periods, each with its own characteristics, separated geographically by the axis formed by Viale Cavour (once the site of the Panfilio canal which linked the castle moat to the nearby town of Pontelagoscuro) and Corso Giovecca. To the south of this line can be found the oldest part of the city, expanded in the 15th century as the population grew; to the north lies the Renaissance zone known as the «Ercole Addition» after the town-planning project that made Ferrara into the «first city of Europe», famous for its intelligent, far-sighted urban planning.

A brief consideration of the major stages in the city's development in the Middle Ages and the 15th century will help us to understand better its layout; within the centre, in fact, a number of different zones can be recognized, each of which is characterized by a different type of street plan.

In broad terms the main phases of the city's growth may be summarised thus:

1) The earliest settlement on the site of present-day Ferrara was a **castrum** or military camp established by the Byzantines of Ravenna to defend their territory on the left bank of the river near a ford. At that time (8th century) the area was a lagoon and had already seen the growth of a small town with a cathedral, the present-day San Giorgio, on the right bank of the river. San Giorgio remained the cathedral of Ferrara until 1135. The Byzantine camp, also known as the Cortesi castle, was situated in the area bound by the present Vie Ghisiglieri, Borgo di Sotto, Carmelino, Cammello and, to the south, Via Carlo Mayr, which

follows the line of the left bank of the river Po Grande of the time. The main street of the castrum was the present-day Via Porta San Pietro.

2) As a result of its proximity to the ford the settlement soon became a trading as well as a military centre; to allow for the necessary expansion of the city canals were dug in order to drain the land; in 984 Tedaldo of Canossa, the new feudal lord of Ferrara, began the construction of the Tedaldo Castle, situated west of the castrum on the same bank of the river (destroyed in the early 17th century to make way for the papal fortress); thus the **linear layout** of this part of the city came into being between the two small fortresses linked to the north by the defensive line of the first walls which followed the line of the former Via dei Sabbioni, the present-day Via Garibaldi, Via Mazzini, Via Saraceno, and limited and protected to the south by the river.

In this period from the end of the tenth to the twelfth centuries Ferrara was organized around the three main axes which crossed the city from west to east — Via Ripagrande — Via Carlo Mayr acting as the quayside for the port, Via delle Volte serving the trading activity which came to the town from the port and Via dei Sabbioni; these were crossed in this period by the Santo Stefano canal (today Via Bocca Canale di Santo Stefano) which ran north-south across the city, dividing it into two «islets».

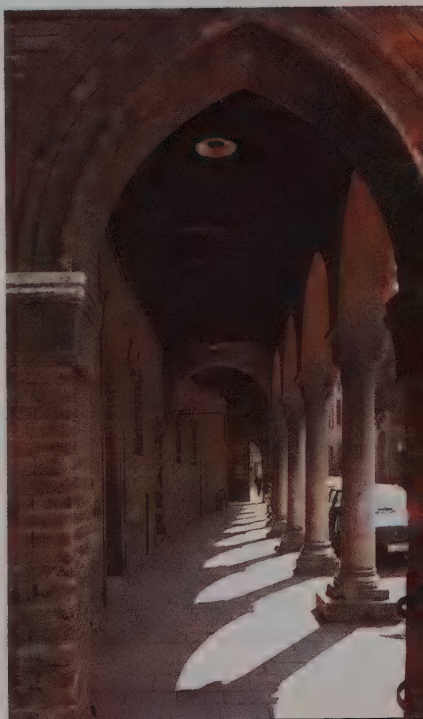
3) After the foundation of the cathedral in 1135 a number of new streets sprung up around it: Via San Romano, Corso Porta Reno, Via Vignatagliata and others which linked the centre of commercial life and port activity (the river) to the new centre of religious and civil life. Despite internal struggles which divided the city in this period — the result of the move from a feudal regime to a system of communal government — the city enjoyed



¹ a certain prosperity which had an important effect upon its urban growth. As well as the development of the new centre which saw the construction of the Palazzo della Ragione and the Palazzo del Signore, later the Palazzo Ducale, completed in 1283, there was a continual expansion northwards.

² 4) The area beyond the walls saw the development of the **borgo nuovo** (new town), with its centre on what is today Via Cairoli. At the end of the 13th century the borgo nuovo was joined to the city by the new line of walls which ran along the present-day Corso Giovecca and remained in use until the 16th century.

There is a certain controversy among historians as to the exact



1. Via delle Volte; 2 Portico with gothic arch, Via Gioco del Pallone.

extent of the territory included in this expansion, known loosely as the **Adelard addition**. The new line of walls included the area to the north of the earlier fortifications, some of which had already been developed (the area around Via Cairoli, see above) and other parts of which were developed later, such as the area around the present-day Via Voltapaletto and Via Savonarola, (once Via di *San Francesco*), built up after the foundation of the Estense Castle in 1385.

In this extensive district, bound to the west by what is now Via Bersaglieri del Po and to the east by Via Ugo Bassi and Via Madama, the nobles of the Este court built their splendid palaces with their large courtyards and gardens, many examples of which may still be seen in Via Savonarola.

5) Meanwhile, around 1320, the city had already embraced the district known as **borgo di sotto** (also called Borgo Vado), which had grown up around the church of Santa Maria in Vado; the urban layout of this area with its widely spaced network of streets crossing one another at right angles points to a later development than that of the earlier neighbouring district; this zone, which lies roughly between the Byzantine camp and the later city walls built by Alfonso I of the Este family and bound to the north by Via Cisterna del Follo, includes the delightful «Schifanoia» of the Este family (1385) and numerous religious houses which give it the character of an oasis of green within the mediaeval city.

6) Finally, the year 1451 saw the so-called **Borso Addition**, the connection to the city of the fluvial island of S. Antonio, rendered possible by the drying up of the Po in this area; Via Ripagrande turned from a quayside into a street, while Via della Ghiara (now Via XX Settembre), the link between the island and the mainland, became the line along which the new expansion centred. This new district was mainly inhabited by mer-

chants and tradesmen linked to the land — slowly reclaimed by means of large-scale drainage programmes — rather than to the activity of the port which had dwindled to nothing some time before as a result of the changes in the river's course. Comparison of the urban layout with the oldest part of the centre shows even greater differences than in the case of the earlier additions: the main streets are broad and spacious and the houses, very different from the palaces of the earlier periods, were designed in a more modern manner, though still retaining gardens and loggias.

The area to the south of Viale Cavour has undergone several changes in the zone now occupied by the **Giardino district**, located between Corso Isonzo to the east and the city walls to the south and west. This site was originally occupied by the Tedaldo castle, surrounded in the Este period by houses, palaces and churches; on its margins there was the Belvedere with the famous «Delizia» of Duke Alfonso. This part of the city was demolished between 1599 and 1610 to make way for the papal fortress which in turn was destroyed (almost obliterated from history) in the second half of the 19th century.

To get an idea of the oldest part of the city and of how it has developed within the context of the original street plan, the visitor must go to Via delle Volte and its side-roads from Via Lucchesi, Muzzina, Sacca, etc., to Via San Romano, Via Ragno, Via Vignatagliata, Via Cammello, Via Fondobanchetto, etc.; for an impression of Renaissance Ferrara, walk down Via Savonarola, Via Terranuova, Via Paglia, Via Beatrice d'Este and Via Madama. It is not our wish to press a particular itinerary on the visitor, but to suggest that he walk through these streets savouring their unity of texture and power of suggestion. We do wish, however, to draw particular attention to Via delle Volte, so named because of the vaulted

walkways which pass overhead linking the houses of Via Ripagrande to storage buildings in the street behind; the popular tone of the neighbourhood, together with its own particular charm, render it one of the most famous streets in Ferrara.

This part of the city has a wealth of monuments and buildings of historical interest which are well worth visiting and which are presented in the following pages from west to east according to the various historical zones as outlined above.

THE «LINEAR» CITY

From Via Garibaldi to Via Mazzini through Via delle Volte.

THE CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA NUOVA OR SAN BIAGIO

The church is noteworthy more for its antiquity than for its architectural value, its appearance having been marred by building works in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The church was founded in the 9th-10th century, though the site may have been inhabited as far back as the 7th century when it formed a small area of land above sea level. In the crypt may be seen the tombs of the Aldighieri, the Ferrara family from whom Dante took his name through his great-great-grandfather Cacciaguida.

PALAZZO BENTIVOGLIO

This edifice already existed in 1512, the year in which the Bentivoglio family took refuge in Ferrara after being driven out of Bologna, and was rebuilt in 1580 under Marquis Leonello.



Much of this splendid building, conceived on a vast scale, has now been lost as a result of vandalism of various kinds over the centuries. The façade, however, remains and is the only one of its kind in Ferrara. In typically Roman-mannerist style with its characteristic decorative display, it includes an impressive portal surmounted by the family's coat of arms and eight carved thophies and other stone figures. Formerly attributed erroneously to Aleotti (an architect

whose work is quite different in conception), the work is in all likelihood that of Pirro Ligorio, a Neapolitan architect who worked in Rome with Girolamo da Carpi in the service of Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este and who worked on Palazzo Spada, to which the façade of our building would seem to be directly related. Ligorio's presence in Ferrara between 1568 and 1583 is, moreover, a matter of historical record.

SAN DOMENICO

The existing church of San Domenico dates back to 1726 and is the work of the architect Vincenzo Santini who decorated the restrained baroque façade with statues by the sculptor Andrea Ferreri.

Inside the church, the aisleless nave illuminated by the large windows is flanked by the side chapels with their paintings by 17th- and 18th-century artists from Ferrara (Scarsellino, Bononi, Cignaroli, etc.).

Among the more interesting works in the church is the small bas-relief of the Madonna and Child on the back of the high altar, the work of Antonio

Rossellino. Also in the apse, the carved wooden choir dating from 1384 is a unique work of its kind in Ferrara.

Worthy of note are the sepulchral monuments of Gian Battista Canani, physician to Pope Julius II, Duke Alfonso II (1573) and Cardinal Giulio. These are to be found in the Canani chapel.

The church itself and the surrounding area were completely transformed by Santini who erected his work on the remains of a 13th century church. Of this latter today remain only an apse that serves as a sacristy and the mutilated bell-tower, both curiously juxtaposed to the façade.

Next to the façade of the mediaeval church (that is, the apse of the present church) once stood the «Crocette di san Domenico», the original seat of the faculties of science, humanities and medicine of the University of Ferrara.

Proceeding along Via Boccanale di Santo Stefano which, as we mentioned above, was in mediaeval times the most important canal in the city centre, we may note the colonnaded front of the buildings which give on to





façade with its bowed brickwork cornices (this type of decoration is very common in the churches of this period in the mediaeval centre) includes a rosette with a rayed monogram symbolic of Christ and medallions with the saints; the portal, which originally belonged to another church, is a late addition.

THE CHURCH OF SAN PAOLO

the street. Arcades of this kind are unusual in Ferrara, and were probably determined here by the presence of the canal.

In the line of buildings, **Casa Cini** stands out as a fine example of a type of architecture to be encountered frequently in the city; it is a mediaeval building with 15th- and 16th-century decoration.

Opposite this is the **church of Santo Stefano**, founded in the 13th century but rebuilt in the early years of the 15th. The

Situated close to Via delle Volte, a thoroughfare of vital importance in mediaeval Ferrara, the church of San Paolo dates back to the tenth century. The present building owes its existence to Alberto Schiatti, who completely rebuilt it after the earthquake of 1570; work was completed in the early 1600's. The façade shows the happy fusion of local Renaissance motifs and the architectural style of the late 16th century with its Roman influences. The sober decoration of the interior, consisting of a nave and two aisles, together with the many paintings make the church almost into a gallery with a permanent exhibition of the works of late 16th-century

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1. Via Spadoni. Church of Saint Dominic;
 2. Interior: Saint Dominic in Heaven; 3. Corso Porta Reno: Church of Saint Paul.







2

Ferrara artists. Works by Scarsellino include the busts of the Carmelite saints located in the spandrels of the arches of the nave, a number of paintings in the third chapel on the left and, most importantly, the painting «Elijah taken up to heaven» in the vault of the apse. This work, which remained practically forgotten for centuries, has been re-evaluated by art historians and is now regarded as the unrecognized antecedent of the work of Carraccis. Dating from the last decade of the 1500's, it provides the first example of a religious painting in which the subject is almost swallowed up by its setting. This near reversal of subject and setting is so original for its time as to be almost tantamount to heresy.

The church also houses some late works by Bastianino in which can be seen the interweaving of his own style — the «Mannerism» of the school of Michelangelo — with the influence of Venetian painting in general and the works of Titian in particular. Amongst the examples of his work we may note the Resurrection, the Annunciation and the Circumcision. The large canvases portraying the story of Saint Paul on the walls of the presbytery are some of Domenico Mona's best works.

Numerous funerary monuments dedicated to the memory of some of Ferrara's most illustrious sons are to be found in the church. So many poets, musicians and painters are here commemorated that the church has even been described as the «pantheon» of the city.

To the left of the church rises the ancient **Leuti tower**, today the bell-tower. It is the only remaining example of the numerous towers erected by wealthy or influential families during the epoch of the Communes.

In former times there was a large monastery connected to the church, consisting of two cloisters, buildings and recreational areas which once covered the whole site. Though rebuilt after the last war, the earlier of the two cloisters, dating from the 16th century, is of great interest.

3



Church of Saint Paul. 1. Interior; 2. Apse: the rape of Elia: Scarsellino (16th c.); 3. Cloister.



PALAZZO PARADISO

Tradition has it that this building derives its name from a fresco painted by the artist Antonio Alberti when Pope Eugene IV, the Emperor John Paleologus and the Patriarch of Constantinople, in Ferrara for the occasion of the Council of Ferrara in 1438, were all guests of the house. The name, however, already existed before this time. Built for the Marquis Alberto V d'Este in 1391, with the exception of a brief period near the beginning of its history it remained in the possession of the Este family until Cardinal Ippolito II sold it to the municipal authorities in 1586 to provide the university with a single seat in the city. The change of use necessitated a series of alterations to the palace under the direction of Alessandro Balbi and Giovan Battista Aleotti. The most important of these was the construction of the façade on Via Scienze; previously the main entrance had been on Via Gioco del Pallone (the position of the old entrance, now bricked up, can still be made out in the wall). The new façade is characterized by its severe classicism, with strong

emphasis given to the central section, this being heightened by the imposing stone portal with its double order and turret.

A further series of restoration and alteration work took place in the second half of the 18th century: to this period belong the present form of the entrance hall with its vaulted ceiling, the enclosure of the gallery above and the construction of the main staircase, the work of Antonio Foschini (1779).

Numerous alterations were subsequently carried out in the following decades by the University, which kept Palazzo Paradiso as its seat until as recently as 1963.

The restoration work now in progress will allow the Ariosto library, which has occupied the piano nobile since its foundation, to expand into the rest of the building. During this work, begun in 1983, a considerable number of works of art dating from the most important periods of the palace's history have come to light. In the room on the right as one enters the frescoes depicting scenes of courtly life, dating from the early 15th century, have been put back, while its

partner (symmetrical to it in relation to the entrance hall) is noteworthy for its wooden ceiling decorated at the end of the 16th century (as in the preceding room) and for the frescoes attributed to the atelier of the Filippis.

Still on the ground floor, the former gallery, corresponding to the original entrance of 1391, is decorated with a wooden ceiling and monochrome frescoes belonging to the same period.

The anatomy lecture theatre on the ground floor has its own entrance and is the work of Francesco Mazzealli. Built in 1731 to a classical pattern with tiers of wooden steps, it was designed to give students the opportunity of attending lessons in anatomy.

The floor above contains works from different periods. Passing through the first room (the former gallery, converted in the late 18th century, with its 15th-century frescoes unfortunately in bad repair) one reaches the 19th-century room with its decorated ceiling by Migliari and then another room with a late eighteenth-century ceiling and, on the walls, fragments of decorations dating from the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries.

Among the remaining rooms belonging to the last alterations of the palace the visitor should not miss the Ariosto room with the poet's tomb (brought from the church of San Benedetto in 1801). Beside the sepulchral monument, the work of Aleotti, the cupboards contain various relics of the poet.

The presence of the Ariosto library since 1753 has made the

building one of the most important centres of culture in the city. The library contains over 200,000 volumes, incunabula, illuminated codexes and manuscripts, including numerous examples of work by poets connected with Renaissance Ferrara (Ariosto, Tasso, Guarini, etc.).

Palazzo Paradiso stands in the centre of one of the most interesting zones of the mediaeval city from a historical-environmental point of view: the streets — Via del Paradiso, Via Romiti, Via Carbone — contain houses and churches which, while not of any outstanding architectural interest of themselves, together combine to form an unspoilt whole of great beauty. For an idea of the atmosphere of this quarter walk down Via Gioco del Pallone — note the **house of the Ariosto family** at the corner of Via Granchio — and Via Cammello which follows the line of the western edge of the area occupied by the Byzantine castrum. In Via Cammello note the little church of **San Gregorio** with its typical 15th-century façade and, proceeding north towards Via Saraceno, the **house of Stella Tolomei**, called the Assassin, the woman who bore Nicolò III d'Este three sons — Ugo, Leonello und Borso.

1. Via delle Scienze: Palace of Paradise (Palazzo Paradiso); 2. Via Gioco del Pallone: House of the Ariosto.

2



Our visit to the «linear city» ends in Via Mazzini (part of the old Via dei Sabbioni, the northern edge of the mediaeval city). This road was the nerve centre of the **Ghetto**, the area of the city to which the Jews of Ferrara were confined from 1624 to 1847; fronting on to the street one may see the Synagogue, given to the community in 1485 and subsequently decorated and embellished inside. Also worthy of note is the group of houses dating back to the first half of the 15th century with their typical high, narrow façades with corbelled cornices and their pointed window arches.

THE «ADELARD ADDITION»

THE BORGO NUOVO

The original 13th-century buildings of the Borgo Nuovo have disappeared on Via Cairoli. The visitor may see, however, the Palazzo **Muzzarelli-Crema** which, erected in the mid-fifteenth century, employs the so-called «baldresche» (arches supporting the upper floor), here to be seen in the courtyard; a similar construction technique may also be noted in the Casa Romei dating from the same period.

1 Fragments of the original 15th-

century frescoes which escaped destruction during extensive alterations in the mid-nineteenth century may still be seen; the present façade, the staircase and some of the decorated rooms on the upper floor date from the 19th century.

Not far away, behind the portal with the bust of Duke Ercole II (traditionally ascribed to Girolamo da Carpi), lies **Palazzo Trotti** which, until the middle of this century, housed the seminary. Inside the building may still be seen two rooms with ceilings decorated by Garofalo in the second decade of the 1500's, though unfortunately these were extensively mutilated not many years ago.

VIA DI SAN FRANCESCO

(**Voltapaletto - Savonarola**)

This street was the main thoroughfare of the «nobles' quarter» which grew up after the building of the Castello Estense and offers the visitors a homogeneous picture with the many fine buildings — palaces and churches — standing side by side in complete harmony.

Note particularly the magnificently ornate façade of the **Palazzo Bevilacqua-Costabili**, which catches the eye with its trophies, busts and mottos in stone and brickwork. The similarity to the façade of the Palazzo Bentivoglio (built about 2





³ thirty years earlier) is quite clear, but here the relation between the decoration and the architectural structure is less mature. The impressive effect of the foreshortened façade, however, is nonetheless, dominating as it does the surrounding fabric without actually overwhelming it.

SAN FRANCESCO

The church of San Francesco, work on which was begun over earlier Franciscan buildings in 1494, offers us one of the finest and most typical examples of the poetical architecture of Biagio Rossetti, whose inspiration remained unspoiled by the partial repairs necessitated by the earthquake of 1570.

Both the exterior and the interior of the church bear witness to Rossetti's debt to the style of the early Tuscan Renaissance



1. Palace Trotti; 2. Palace Bevilacqua-Costabili; 3. Church of Saint Francis; 4. Interior: pictures of the Saint. Fresco (16th c.).

which, in his own personal manner, he reinterpreted in the light of his local experience.

On the exterior both the façade and the south wall follow the lines of the interior with their high lesenes. Note, in the wall, the position of the large windows which, set low down, mark off the lesenes in pairs, the latter indicating the position of the side walls of the chapels; the interior was, as we shall see, greatly influenced by this arrangement. The great volutes of the façade, on the other hand, recall the composite orders of the Renaissance, particularly examples such as Alberti's Santa Maria Novella.

The brickwork cornice that embraces these two sides includes an unusual frieze consisting of tondi supported by angels who flank the bust of Saint Francis; the fact that this work is attributed to Domenico di Paris or to Gabriele Frisoni bears witness to the high quality of its decoration.

The majestic interior of the church is one of the earliest examples in Ferrara of the application of the compositional theories of the Renaissance — those of Brunelleschi in particular — based upon the use of simple geometric forms arranged in careful proportion: note

especially how in the nave the square area covered by the central cupolas is balanced by two in the side aisles and two chapels. This strictly geometric layout does not continue into the transept, where the central cupola is flanked by two oval cupolas, or into the apse, which is broader than the nave.

Zevi has drawn attention to the manner in which the layout of the windows in the side chapels, mentioned above, illuminates the seven transverse walls which direct the light upward into the aisles, giving the interior a unique «terrestrial quality» of immanence.

Among the many frescoes those by Girolamo da Carpi in the nave and the transept stand out particularly; painted around 1530, they portray figures of saints surrounded by monochrome decoration with leaves, putti and emblems. The decoration of the cupolas (which have been reconstructed and reduced in height) dates from the last century.

Inside the church there are many works of art dating mainly from the 1500's and 1600's, but unfortunately many paintings by famous artists such as Dosso Dossi and Cosmé Tura have been removed; the works of Garofalo were taken to the Art Gallery in





2 the nineteenth century and replaced with copies.

Works of particular interest include: the mausoleum of Chiron Francesco Villa, a baroque monument to the condottiere who died in 1670, located in the right transept; the inscription on the base and the bas-reliefs record the valour and courage of Villa, who led the troops of France, of Venice and of Savoy.

In the presbytery, the triptych by Domenico Mona showing the Ascension, the Deposition and the Resurrection of Christ (ca. 1500).

In the left transept, a sarcophagus in the style of Ravenna (5th century), rediscovered in 1920 on the site of the friary. It was used in the Renaissance as a sarcophagus for Francesco Ariosto, uncle of the famous poet.



Church of Saint Francis: interior. 1. Triptych: Deposition, Ascension and Resurrection. Domenico Mona; 2. Flagellation: stucco and fresco (15th and 16th c.); 3. Jesus arrested in the Garden of Olives; 4 Shrine (17th c.).

THE ESTENSE PALACE

(Also known as «di Renata di Francia»). Now the seat of the University of Ferrara, work on the Palazzo Estense was begun for the Duke in 1475, probably under the direction of Pietro Benvenuto degli Ordini; a few years later Biagio Rossetti was also involved in the project. It is not possible to identify the hand of the latter master whose part in the work was very limited. The



of the piano nobile with their ornate ceilings (the work of Vittorio Bigari). The vast park enclosed by the high wall which surrounds it has maintained the overall shape of the old garden, albeit with different designs and layout.

The history of Palazzo Estense is closely linked with that of the Este family: given by Duke Ercole I to his Chamberlain Giulio Tassoni, it returned to the family in the person of Ferrante, then passing to the Cardinals Ippolito II and Luigi. The building owes its fame, however, to Renata di Francia, wife of Ercole II, who lived here after she had been effectively banished from the Castle because of her Calvinist beliefs.

original aspect of the building has in any case all but disappeared (with the exception of the low gallery of the courtyard) as a result of alterations commissioned in the mid-18th century by Marquis Sigismondo Cavassini who bought the palace in 1738.

The alterations, carried out by Girolamo del Pozzo, concerned the façade, the stairs with their stucco decoration and the rooms

CASA ROMEI

The house of Giovanni Romei, rich banker and husband of Polissena d'Este, was built around 1445, probably by the ducal architect Pietro Benvenuto degli Ordini.

Upon Giovanni's death the house passed into the possession of the Poor Clares of the





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neighbouring convent of Corpus Domini. The sisters used it for the occasional visits of illustrious guests such as Lucrezia Borgia, then Duchess of Ferrara, and the famous Cardinal Ippolito II.

In 1870 the Casa Romei, in an extremely bad state of repair, passed into the ownership of the state. After considerable restoration, in 1952 the building became the permanent home of the municipal collection of frescoes and statues collected from the various buildings of the city.

The building as it is today differs little from the original Renaissance conception, there having been no significant alterations to the fabric, decorations or individual architectural elements; it remains the only extant example of a 15th-century

nobleman's house in Ferrara, the other buildings of the period having been either extensively altered in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries (Palazzo Muzzarelli-Crema, for example) or demolished.

The historical importance of the building as a testament to Renaissance architecture is matched by the beauty of its conception; note in particular the charm of the courtyard with its asymmetric layout of open galleries and supporting arches. This is without doubt not only one of the most beautiful but also one of the best preserved corners of Ferrara.

It is interesting to note how different this central courtyard and the layout of the building are from the mid-fifteenth century architecture of other centres of the Renaissance in Italy. Bruno Zevi, noting the persistence of the mediaeval idiom in the architecture of Ferrara, draws attention to the «grotesquely expressive» effect of the main courtyard of the Casa Romei. The heavy appearance of the external façade is contradicted by the vivacity of the courtyard, accentuated by the lively quality of the decoration in the upper gallery; the frescoes

1. Palace Estense San Francesco. Casa Romei; 2. Court of Honour; 3. Sala delle Sibille (Sybils room).



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portray the arms of Giovanni Romei with a rampant dog framed by blossoms; originally the design was continued on the painted shutters.

The large open gallery at ground level situated opposite the present entrance is also frescoed with decorations divided into sections by painted pilaster strips.

The large monogram in brickwork on the wall above bearing the Christological symbol IHS is a later addition dating from the time when the house formed part of the convent of Corpus Domini.

The tour of the interior follows a clockwise itinerary starting from the east side (the room of the Sibyls and the room of the Prophets); the visitor then crosses the main gallery to reach the west side with the 16th-century room and the «lapidario» and the rooms of the upper floor.

THE ROOM OF THE SIBYLS: the room is dominated by the large fireplace with its brickwork moulding bearing the arms of Giovanni Romei, the only piece of its kind in Ferrara; the name refers to the wall frescoes which portray the sibyls bearing scrolls prophesy-

ing the coming of the Saviour; they are attributed to Andrea di Pietro and Giovanni Galeazzo, Lombard artists working in Ferrara around the middle of the 15th century.

THE ROOM OF THE PROPHETS: the frescoes on the walls (mid-15th century) depict figures of the prophets and scrolls bearing Biblical and philosophical mottos.

THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY ROOM: the decorated fascia is attributed to Cesare Filippi; note the large

stone fireplace and, on the opposite wall, the fresco depicting the Madonna and Child, a rare example in Ferrara of a work by Antonio Alberti, an artist whose pictures are mostly found in central Italy.

THE LAPIDARIO: the three rooms house a collection of lapidaries, architectural fragments, sepulchral monuments and brickwork and stone decorations from various sources dating from the 15th to the 19th centuries. Among the many exhibits note particularly: in the first room, various decorative fragments (door jambs, architraves, etc.) from the Carthusian Monastery (Certosa); also the sepulchral monument of Tommasino Gruamonte Estense, dating from the end of the 15th century and formerly in the church of Sant'Andrea; in the second room, the pulpit from the refectory of the Certosa (early 16th century), religious works and the remains (head and hand) of the statue of Napoleon Bonaparte that once stood in Piazza Ariostea on the site now occupied by the statue of Ariosto. The third room houses lapidaries of various origin, armorial bearings and the collection of brickwork decorations (cornices, archivolts, etc.) taken from the city's Renaissance buildings.

On the upper floor admire the brightness of the rooms, decorated in the mid-sixteenth century by artists of the Filippi atelier at the behest of Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este; the grotesque designs of the fasciae and the ceilings immediately bring to mind those of the Palazzina di Marfisa d'Este which, however, are far richer and more complex. These decorations are characterized by a certain moderation and restrained grace that make the profane subject matter more appropriate in light of the use to which the Casa Romei was put at that time.

Note the ceiling of the third room with the central painting depicting Tobias and the Angel, attributed to Bastianino, and the picture of David and Goliath in

the centre of the fourth rooms, also by Bastianino. The next room, the hall of honour, has a frieze with eagles within which a fascia bears the motto of Cardinal Ippolito (*ab insomni non custodita dracone*) of uncertain meaning.

The last, small room with its panelled ceiling decorated with woodcuts is traditionally thought to have been Giovanni Romei's study.

These rooms house a collection of frescoes (13th to 16th century) taken from religious buildings no longer extant, sculptures and furniture; note particularly the following: in the second room, the statue of San Nicola da Tolentino and a high-relief depicting the Deposition of Christ by Alfonso Lombardi (early 16th century) and other marble reliefs of the Lombard school; in the third room, frescoes of the school of Antonio Alberti (first half of the 15th century); the fourth room contains figures of the saints by an unknown master (early 16th century) and an interesting example of late gothic sculpture (Madonna and Child with Saint Peter and Saint Paul); the far wall of the main hall is occupied by the splendid Crucifixion by artists of the Rimini school (circa 1350) while the other frescoes are parts of a cycle by artists of the Rimini-Padana school depicting the Last Judgement (late 14th century). In the next room the visitor may see the Ascension by Serafino dei Serafini (1361).

Despite its double loggia, the second courtyard of the Casa Romei is less magnificent than the first; at the foot of the stairway, under the southern loggia, stands the coat of arms of Cardinal Ippolito; the main body of the building above has, on the upper floor, a number of rooms with wooden partitions painted with allegorical figures, dating from the first half of the 16th century, discovered during restoration work.

The gallery opposite, which overlooks Via Savonarola, has retained some of the original decoration which once covered the building's exterior.

THE «BORGO DI SOTTO»

The Borgo di Sotto is interesting both for its fine monuments and, in Via Madama and Via Borgo Vado in particular, for the overall impression it creates.

In Via Madama, opposite the high wall of the «Gesuali» house, the visitor may see **Palazzo Polo**, one of the finest examples of sixteenth-century Ferrara architecture. The portal and the rusticated corners of the façade, its prominent horizontal string course, the upper windows with their tympana and other features all combine to define the style, various examples of which may be found in both the mediaeval areas of the city and in the «Ercole Addition».

Recent restoration work (the building is today used for the offices of the provincial education office) has revealed decorated ceilings dating from different periods (16th-19th centuries) and, most spectacularly, the splendid decorative work on the walls of the main hall depicting a series of nine muses. The high figurative quality and the «ar-

chitectural» layout of the whole work, in which the figures are enclosed within mock-marble frames, suggest that it may be attributed to Girolamo da Carpi and Camillo Filippi.

SANTA MARIA IN VADO

One of the oldest and most venerated places of worship in Ferrara. It was on this site that a miracle occurred on Easter Sunday in the year 1171 when, during the celebration of the Mass, blood gushed from the Host, staining the vault; at that time there was a heretical belief that denied the real presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist, and the church has been sacred to the cult of Christ's Most Precious Blood ever since.

Work on the present basilica was begun in 1495 at the wish of Ercole I d'Este; two names have come down to us as being involved in the project — Ercole de' Roberti and Biagio Rossetti — the latter being described in the documents as «Director of Works», and this has led to some controversy as to the actual roles of the two men.

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² Modern art historians tend to-day to the belief that Rossetti was not merely the executor of the other's plans, particularly as analysis of the compositional process has revealed that the basilica has much in common with both earlier works (San Francesco) and later works (San Benedetto) of the master.

In order to gain a true understanding of Rossetti's work it must be borne in mind that after the earthquake of 1570 the roof of the aisle was considerably raised, affecting not only the building's proportions but also the diffusion of light within it.

The interior was enriched with sumptuous decorations on the walls and baroque altars in the side chapels, while the nave, originally intended as a copy of the layout of San Francesco with a pattern of squares covered by cupolas, had a flat ceiling from the beginning.

If for a moment, however, we imagine the nave divided into three areas, the cupola over the point where it is crossed by the transept, and the walls bare, the resultant proportions give a truly Rossettian space.

Let us now turn from this critique to the church as it is today; a little on the dark side, perhaps, but containing a wealth of fine works of art by some of Ferrara's greatest 17th- and 18th-century painters.

On the ceiling of the nave can be seen Giulio Cesare Cromer's

1. Church of Santa Maria in Vado; 2. Interior.





2 «Presentation of Mary at the Temple» and five paintings by Carlo Bononi; also by Bononi are the figures of the saints between the arches and many of the paintings in the presbytery: «The glorification of the name of God» in the bowl-shaped vault of the apse, «The flight into Egypt» and «The dispute in the temple» to the sides of the large windows, «The marriage at Cana» and «The Betrothal of the Virgin» on the presbytery walls; still in the presbytery, «The nativity of Christ», «The nativity of the Madonna» and, on the ceiling, «The Assumption» are by Domenico Mona.

The large central ancona contains Camillo Filippi's «Annunciation» (1561); among the works which decorate the altars of the aisles (some of which are 19th-century copies of originals today in the Art Gallery) note the «Baptism of Christ» by Bastianino (left aisle, baptismal font).



3 In the right transept the visitor may see the small temple of the Most Precious Blood, built in 1590 by Alessandro Balbi around the remains of the vault stained with the miraculous blood and brought here in the 15th century.

From the church one enters the Sacristy with its many fine paintings by Bononi, Scarsellino and others.

Turning left as one leaves the church into the first cloister, reminiscent of Rossetti's style, one gets some idea of the monastery.

Church of Santa Maria in Vado: interior. 1. Shrine of the Sacred Blood; 2. Santa Volticina del Preziosissimo Sangue; 3. Painted ceiling: «the Miracle of the Blood»: Carlo Bonomi.



PALAZZO SCHIFANOIA

The emblematic name «Schifanoia» («schivar la noia» or «away with boredom») goes back to the origins of the building, today the home of the Civic Museum of Ancient Art; the first part, in fact, was built at the wish of Alberto V d'Este in 1385 as a *Delizia* or «folly» - a building in the midst of the quiet of the gardens designed for rest and entertainment. Schifanoia is the only remaining example of the follies constructed by the Este family within the city walls, the others all having been demolished long ago.

After being made Lord of the city, Alberto had the building extended in 1391 to make a single-storied edifice of considerable size (the original building of 1385 consists of the ground floor part to the left of the renowned portal). The addition of the upper part of the building, proposed by Duke Borso, was the work of the Ducal architect Pietro Benvenuto degli Ordini and dates from 1465-1469.

In terms of its size the present building is not very different from what it must have been

when work was completed in 1469, but its external appearance must have been completely different. It is worth stopping for a moment to picture the façade covered by a coloured mock-marble fresco (traces of which remain on the east wall, today forming part of the museum) and crowned by painted merlons; the colours would have been bright and festive, forming an ideal background for the theatrical performances which, contemporary documents tell us, were given in the open space before the building.

The façade was completed by the portal, the only vertically conceived element in it, which provides a natural focal point for the eye and, at the same time, is finely decorated, the decoration being sometimes attributed to the design of Francesco del Cossa.

Borso's radical transformation of the building also involved interior alterations and the rich, new decorations, some of which may still be seen in the Hall of the Months and the Stucco Room.

A later extension by Biagio Rossetti in 1493 added another seven metres to the east of the building and unified its appearance with the addition of a grand cornice of Renaissance style.

Centuries of neglect have taken a heavy toll on the building. Passing from Duke Alfonso I to Francesco, Duke of Massalombarda, and then to his daughter Marfisa, it was then let from 1582 onwards and used for the most varied and unsuitable purposes — even, in the 18th century as a tobacco factory. As a result the wall decorations, including those of the «Hall of the Months», disappeared under layers of plaster and were only rediscovered in the middle of last century.

The present entrance to the museum (1986) is through the doorway set inappropriately into the façade in 1885. As from the spring of 1987, however, the main door will once more be used, giving access directly to the «Hall of the Months» and thence,

on the mezzanine, to the wing of 1385, at present undergoing restoration.

Access to the Hall of the Months via the hall and the nineteenth-century staircase is quite wrong with regard to the conception behind the great sequence of pictures within; originally, in fact, the door through which one entered (the form of which is still visible) was in the north wall, access to which was via a large external staircase that collapsed in the 18th century. This change is anything but insignificant since it upsets the logical sequence of the pictures, each one of which is intimately linked to those before and after it. Upon entering one should therefore turn to the right to face the south wall, which begins the sequence with a perspective view (almost completely lost) and then the month of January. Proceeding along this south wall one can make out scenes of courtly life in the spaces flanking what was once the fireplace and then the month of February. This whole wall is visibly damaged to the extent that some parts are illegible.

The months of March, April and May are on the east wall; these are followed on the north wall by a picture of horsemen and then by the months of June and July; an architectural view precedes the months of August and September, themselves followed by another architectural panel. On the west wall, through which we entered, the months of October, November and December.

This, then, is a complex and carefully constructed work, the

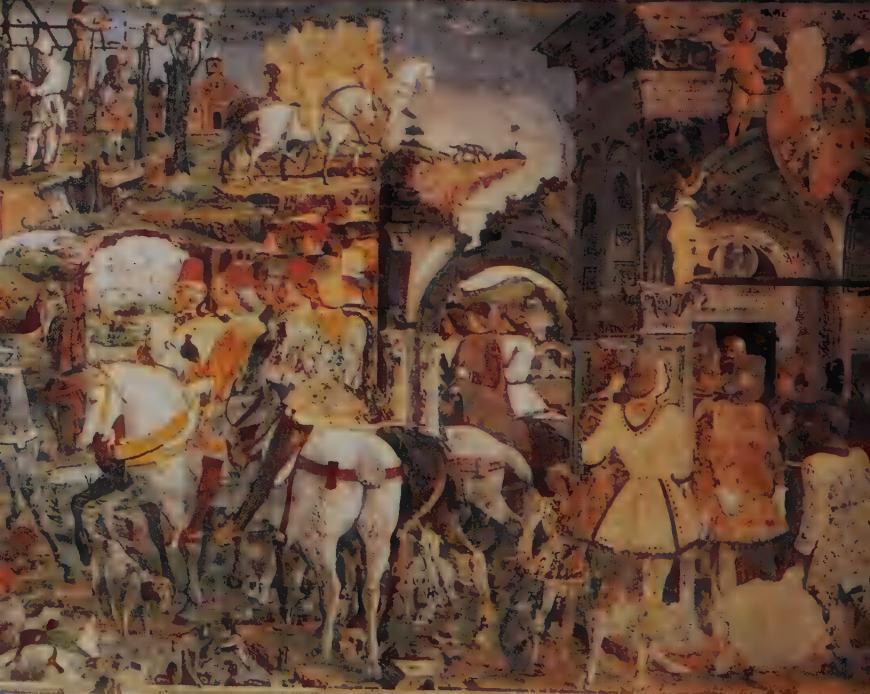
symbolic and cultural content of which is traditionally attributed to Pellegrino Prisciani, celebrated humanist of the Este court.

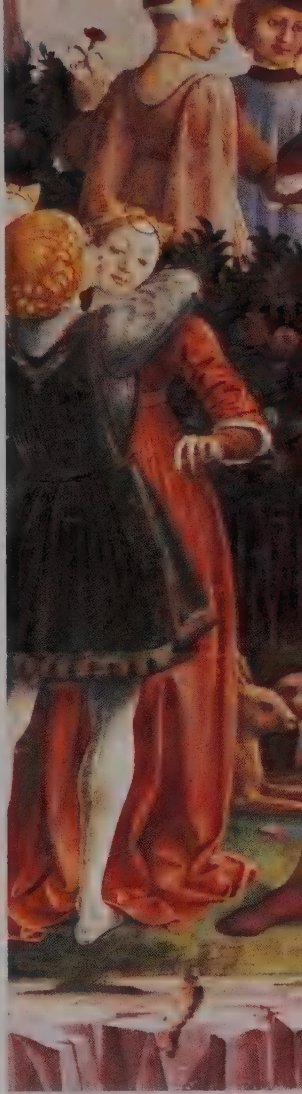
The orchestration of the spaces and the figurative concept of the work, however, is the fruit of the members of the «*officina ferrarese*», the school of painters of the 1400's, who created in the «Hall of the Months» their masterpiece; the painters involved included, amongst others, Francesco del Cossa (1435-1478) and Ercole dei Roberti (1450-1496).

The south wall of the sequence is no longer visible, but in the east wall, on which Francesco del Cossa worked, we can enjoy scenes crowded with the depiction of persons and events against the exuberant background of nature in all her glory.

The panels of the months are divided horizontally into three fasciae: the upper one depicts the triumphs of the pagan gods on their chariots with scenes and symbols appropriate to each one; the middle one shows the signs of the zodiac and their *varios decans*; the lower one portrays scenes from the life of Duke Borso and from country life.

THE MONTH OF MARCH: in the upper section the Triumph of Minerva, goddess of wisdom, between a group of sages and maidens intent on her weaving and embroidery; in the centre the sign of Aries; in the lower fascia the Duke exercising justice; the architectural setting of the scene with its protagonists, putti and festoons is on a classical model typical of the humanistic culture of the time; beside this, the duke setting out on a hunt amidst horsemen, falcons and hounds; in a separate section a scene depicting pruning. ►





THE MONTH OF APRIL: in the upper section the chariot of Venus drawn by swans; the symbolism of the relation between the triumphant goddess and the

figure of Mars (war) kneeling before her in chains is clear; around them are groups of youths in amorous attitudes and the three graces against a background depicting nature bursting forth in which rabbits, symbol of fertility, are prominent. In the middle section Taurus, the bull, with its decans. At the bottom the Duke gives a coin to Scoccola, the jester, while the courtiers look on; the return from the hunt and the Palio of San Giorgio watched by the Duke, the judges and ladies at the window.



THE MONTH OF MAY: in the upper fascia is Apollo in the chariot driven by Aurora; above him the nine muses, Pegasus, the spring of Castalia, sparrow-hawks, Python's skin on a stool - elements relating to his divinity and to his Temples; also a group of poets and an array of putti; in the central section the sign of Gemini; at the bottom a horse and part of a reaping scene survive from when a door was set into the wall in the 18th century.

On the north wall the first section depicts a group of horsemen; it is attributed to a painter with a style very similar to that of Cosmé Tura.



THE MONTH OF JUNE: at the top the triumph of Mercury, protector of trade, on a chariot drawn by eagles; the god is surrounded by merchants busy bargaining while to the left the wolf and the monkey, symbolic of trade are depicted; on the right Io turned into a heifer by Juno and Argus decapitated by Mercury. In the central fascia Cancer; in the lower section Borso goes in procession to receive a petition

from a kneeling figure and, in the background, a scene of life in a town on a river. The artist who painted the month of June is traditionally known as «the master with the gaping eyes».



THE MONTH OF JULY: the upper fascia is dedicated to the triumph of Jupiter who shares his chariot, drawn by lions, with Cybele, goddess of the earth; beside them a group of priests, a wedding procession and the cross - section of a church with monks; the central section depicts Leo; the lower picture is dominated by a substantial piece of classically inspired architecture framing the duke and

others, possibly ambassadors; on the right the duke with Knights, on the left hemp-working.



THE MONTH OF AUGUST: in the upper fascia Ceres in a chariot drawn by dragons surrounded by people working in the fields (on the left) and merchants (on the right); in the background a city and, at the side the rape of Proserpina and the desperation of her damsels. In the centre Virgo; in the lower fascia Borso receives ambassadors and then leaves for the hunt; in the background Renaissance buildings and, on

the left, threshing. The artist of this month, close to Ercole de' Roberti in style, is known as «the master of Ercole».



THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER: the deity in the chariot drawn by monkeys is Vulcan, whose forge can be seen on the left; the shield depicting Romulus and Remus being suckled by the Wolf is linked to the scene on the right, the Love of Mars and the nymph Ilia; in the central section Libra; and underneath scenes from the life of the duke: receiving ambassadors in an ornate building and on horseback with his

retinue; meanwhile, harvesting in the fields. This panel and the architectural view that follows are attributed to Ercole de' Roberti.

At present the museum houses collections of bronzes, ceramics, paintings, etc., including some works of great value; the rooms are often used for special exhibitions.

The Stucco Room, which may be found next to the Hall of the Months, is of particular interest; the rich decorations on the wooden ceiling and on the walls are ascribed to Domenico di Paris (second half of the 15th century).

The last room on the upper floor — Rossetti's extension — contains a wall painted to resemble coloured marbles which provides us with a good idea of the original appearance of the exterior of the building; discovered only recently during restoration work on the museum, it owes its preservation to the extension of 1493 at which time it became an internal wall.

Attached to the museum of Schifanoia is the **Roman Lapidary**, recently reorganized in the former 15th-century church of Santa Libera.

ORATORIO DELL'ANNUNZIATA

Going down Via Borgo di Sotto the visitor passes in front of the **Oratorio dell'Annunziata**, also known as the Chiesa della Morte (Church of Death) as it was once the home of the Archconfraternity of Death (Arciconfraternita della Morte). In the simple architecture of Giovan Battista Aleotti, the church is best-known for the cycle of frescoes that make up the «legend of the Cross»; inside the panels decorated in the 17th century that link up the scenes, Sebastiano, Camillo and Cesare Filippi, Nicolò Rosselli and Dielai tell the story of the wood of the Holy Cross from the episode with Adam, on the point of death, from whose mouth the sapling from which the Cross will in time be fashioned springs forth, right up to its recovery by Saint Helena and the victory of Constantine



over Maxentius. This cycle of frescoes is of great importance in the history of art in 16th-century Ferrara despite its rather bad state of repair, the result of later repainting and neglect.

As well as the cycle of frescoes there is a «Resurrection» by an unknown 15th-century artist in a style clearly inspired by the works of Pisanello.

Oratory of the Annunciation. 1. Resurrection. Fresco (15th c.).



THE BORSO ADDITION

In this area of the city, urbanized in 1451, walk along Via XX Settembre, formerly Via Ghiara, the far end of which with its delightful **prospect** was added in 1776; more imposing is the similar addition at the end of

Corso Giovecca: a main thoroughfare of the city, there was originally no gate at its end, and it was scenically completed in the 18th century.

Walking along the street we may stop to admire the façade of the house that **Biagio Rossetti** built as his home. Parts of the original building have unfortunately been lost, but the façade has remained almost a prototype of a style of house (not «palazzo») in Ferrara. The simple design, characterized by its coupled windows and brickwork decorations, was taken by Biagio Rossetti from Ferrara's architectural traditions.



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Oratory of the Annunciation. 1. Main room; 2. View of Via XX Settembre; 3. House of Biagio Rossetti; 4. Palace of Ludovico il Moro: entrance to the museum; 5. Courtyard.

PALAZZO DI LUDOVICO IL MORO

This grandiose edifice was long attributed to Bramante but evidence now available demonstrates that it was designed by Biagio Rossetti, who worked on it from about 1495 to 1503, leaving it uncompleted. The attribution to Bramante was partly dependent on another error of fact which had the Palazzo built by Antonio Costabili, the Este ambassador in Milan, on behalf of Ludovico il Moro; in actual fact, however, the Milanese nobleman had already found a suitable residence when he arrived in Ferrara, home town of his wife Beatrice, Duke Ercole I's daughter, after having been expelled from his own town by the French.

Biagio Rossetti would certainly have been considered too modest an architect (he was seen as little more than a simple builder) to design a building of such a kind; in fact the building abounds with features typical of his poetic architecture, a blend of Renaissance and motifs taken from the local building tradition.

Over the centuries the Palazzo has changed hands many times and undergone alterations to both the fabric and decorations



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alike; of the most extensive of these (18th century) today only a few isolated features remain. The small rooms (next to the «Sala del Tesoro») access to which is via the second courtyard, are of particular interest: recent restoration work has returned them to their original elegance - the sober stucco work, the

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painted ceilings and the two-colour terra cotta floors.

The building came into the state's hands in 1920; extensive restoration was carried out between 1932 and 1935 and it became the National Archaeological Museum. During this restoration work a mistaken interpretation unfortunately reduced the loggia of the upper floor to a regular series of open arches: up until that time the original arrangement of two open and two closed arches had survived the various alterations,

albeit in a bad state of repair.¹ This feature — the arrangement of the apertures in pairs — was one that Biagio Rossetti used consistently in all his works (from his churches to his own house and it may be found in other parts of this building: in the south wall, for example, and in the wall that gives on to Via Porta d'Amore, both of which also display his skill in avoiding what is trite or banal by constantly varying both the shape and the position of the apertures within the façade.

Note, in the unfinished courtyard, the stone decorations attributed to Gabriele Frisoni and the splendid brickwork cornice resembling that of the west side; opening off the loggia that runs between the courtyard and the garden, the «Aula costabiliana» or «Sala del Tesoro» has a ceiling decorated by Benvenuto Tisi da Garofalo and assistants (1505-8). The scene with its balustrades in



National archeological museum of Spina. 1. Gallery of pirogues; 2. Main gallery; 3. Main gallery; 4. Bronze figure representing a warrior cutting himself a lock of hair (5th c. B.C.); 5. «Pelike» (Greek amphor) with red figurines.

perspective (the prototype for works of this kind was the «Sala degli Sposi» painted by Mantegna in Mantova around 1460) is filled with putti, people and animals set in a lively representation of courtly life; clumsy restoration and reworking have unfortunately made it difficult to recognize the contribution of the individual masters.

In the east wing of the Palazzo there are two ceilings by Garofalo depicting «scenes from the life of Saint Joseph» and «Sibyls and Prophets», both in a bad state of repair.

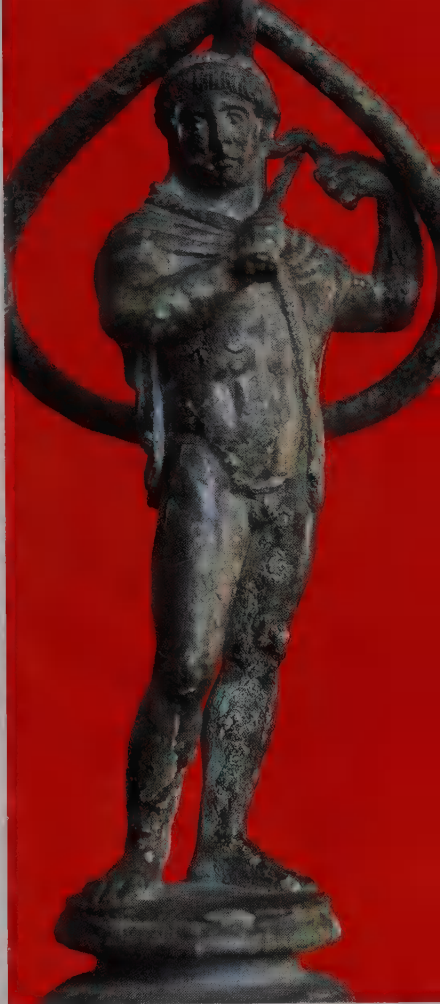
The area behind the building today offers a fine example of an Italian garden, including a labyrinth.

As we noted above, since 1935 the building has housed the National Archaeological Museum of Spina with its collection of exhibits from the archaeological digs on the site of the Etruscan city.

Spina was located in what is now the Valley of Comacchio and was, in its heyday (6th - 3rd centuries B.C.), a port and trading centre of enormous importance through which all the traffic between the Etruscan world and the eastern Mediterranean passed.

Because of its importance as a trading centre Spina has yielded a surprising number of archaeological finds from Egypt, Greece and other areas with which the city had links; in particular the quantity and quality of Attic ceramics on display in the museum make it an essential point of reference for specialists and enthusiasts in this area.

At present it is unfortunately impossible to give further information with regard to the exhibits and their arrangement in the museum as the major restoration programme now under way will affect both the fabric of the building and the organization of the museum. At the end of these works the museum will be extended into a number of additional rooms on the piano nobile: until then it is not possible to provide any further details.





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SANT'ANTONIO IN POLESINE

Not far from Palazzo Ludovico il Moro is the large complex of the Convent of Sant'Antonio in Polesine, the entrance to which in Via del Gambone is marked by a portal with a brickwork statue of Sant'Antonio Abate.

Up until the very end of last century the convent boasted two cloisters with numerous other buildings, courtyards and kitchen-gardens enclosed by a high wall that guaranteed the enclosure of the Benedictine nuns. Subsequent impoverishment and, in particular, the transformation of the western area into barracks have not, however, destroyed the magical atmosphere of the interior in the rooms where the nuns still live, in the cloister and, especially, in the large unspoilt garden in the east of the complex.

This is perhaps the only religious house in Ferrara in which as well as admiring the

historic and artistic qualities of the building it is still possible to sense the spiritual continuity that links today's community to that of the past.

The nuns of the Benedictine

S. Antonio in Polesine. 1. Exterior; 2. Cloister.

order established themselves on this site (at that time an island) in 1257 at the invitation of Beatrice II d'Este, the daughter of Marquis Azzo Novello; Beatrice was also responsible for the enlargement and repair of an earlier Augustinian monastery.

In the centuries that followed the convent was the object of continual renovation and decoration, starting with Maestro Tigrino's work at the end of the 13th century during which the church and the cloister received their first frescoes.

Access to visitors is unfortunately limited to the outer church, the nuns' chancel and some of the rooms overlooking the cloister; the interest and beauty of the view from the little garden facing the porch of the outer church (15th century), however, make up for the limited access.

In the outer church the exuberant baroque decoration of Francesco Ferrari (late 17th century) stands out: the Eternal Father, the Madonna and Child and Saint Anthony and Saint Benedict are shown in the centre, surrounded by the Benedictine saints amid scenery set in il-

lusionist perspectives; the stucco work that ornaments the windows and balustrades and the baroque altar complete the interior harmoniously.

The inner church or nuns' chancel consists of a room with three chapels containing frescoes from various periods, mainly 14th century. This is the most important collection of religious paintings in Ferrara, the 14th-century parts being of particular value. The chapel on the right contains paintings depicting episodes from the life of Christ, attributed to masters of the Giotto school influenced by the Bolognese artists (early 14th century); the flight of steps that cuts across the scenes was put in the 15th century to allow the nuns direct access from their cells to their church. The frescoes in the chapel on the left depict the stories of Christ and the Virgin and were painted in successive stages by artists of the Bologna and Rimini schools. Under the ribbed vault of the central chapel with its Grotesque decoration by masters of the Filippi atelier (16th century) we see: on the wall facing us the Annunciation attributed to





Domenico Panetti (late 15th century) and, on the other walls, pictures of the Madonna and the Saints dating from the early 15th century.

The screen separating the nuns' chancel from the outer church has on it the Flagellation, attributed to Nicolò Roselli (16th century); the wooden choir dates from the 15th century.

From this chapel one may enter a small room with a decorated panelled ceiling on which one can admire the Funeral, a polychrome terracotta by Ludovico Castellani (C. 1450).

There are numerous other works of art in the convent: the cloister walls still bear traces of their 14th-century frescoes; the chapter house has a fine wooden ceiling decorated with secular figures and grotesque motifs; the refectory, the «small dormitory» and other rooms reveal decorated fasciae and wooden ceilings from the 15th century, the period in which the first cloister of the convent was considerably extended and enlarg-

ed. Going out into the corridor one sees the tomb of the blessed Beatrice d'Este; outside, the beautiful arches of the 14th-century cloister; on the upper floor there are a number of small wooden columns which may date back to the original mid-13th-century convent.

S. Antonio in Polesine. 1. Interior of the external church; 2. Ceiling of the external church; 3. Internal church: nuns choir.



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S. Antonio in Polesine. 1. Chapels of the internal church or nuns choir; Chapel on the right: story of Jesus. 2. Jesus carrying the cross (detail); 3. Jesus descends into hell; 4. Jesus talks to the doctors; 5. Crucifixion.





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S. Antonio in Polesine. Chapel on the left: story of Christ and the Virgin. 1. Massacre of the innocents; 2. Nativity; 3. Deposition. Central Chapel; 4. Annunciation; 5. Wall on the left: Virgin and Saints; 6. Wall on the right; 7. Wall on the right: martyrdom of Saint Stephen. Detail.



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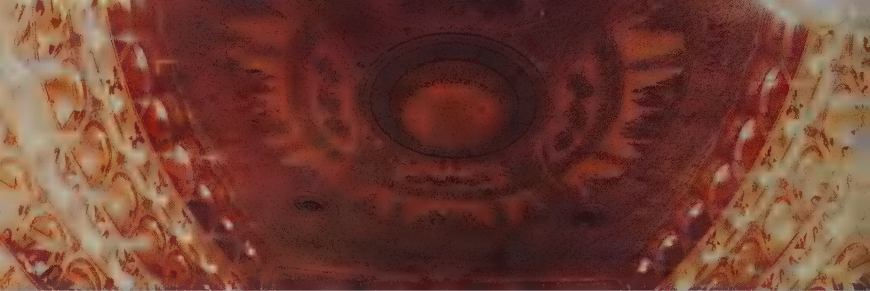
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2 | CORSO GIOVECCA

This street is the dividing line between the oldest part of the city and the sixteenth-century expansion.

Its continuation leading away from the Castello Estense, the present-day Viale Cavour, was until the middle of last century the Panfilio canal, which ran between the two towns in the west, dividing them; and, though this zone is mostly recent, Corso Giovecca still boasts numerous buildings of high architectural merit.

On the corner near the castle we can admire the impressive proportions of the **Teatro Comunale** (opera house), erected at the end of the 18th century by Antonio Foschini and Cosimo Morelli; the decorations inside are by 19th-century artists from Ferrara: Francesco Migliari, Domenichini and others.

On the opposite side of the street note the **Church of San Carlo**, built between 1610 and 1620, designed by Giovan Battista Aleotti, and the 19th-century building that has replaced part of the **Sant'Anna Hospital**; the



PALAZZO ROVERELLA

The attractive façade of the Palazzo Roverella stands almost opposite the Piazzetta dei Teatini; the residence of Gaetano Magnanini, Duke Alfonso I's private secretary, it was erected around 1508; it passed into the ownership of the Roverella family in the early 18th century and was extensively restored in the 1920's.

Though there is no proof, the attribution of the building to the hand of Biagio Rossetti is probably correct: the design of the façade includes a number of features often used by the Ferrarese architect such as the paired windows round the lesenes (as in San Francesco), the portal and the rich decoration derived from local traditions.

Even more interesting than the individual Rossettian features is the careful layout of the façade: this is the only one of Rossetti's works viewed directly from the front and he here adopts an architectural framework that emphasizes the sense of space; the reference to Leon Battista Alberti's Palazzo Rucellai, the prototype of secular Renaissance architecture, is clear,

civic hospital, founded in the 15th century, was located in the Basilian monastery, one of the courtyards of which may still be admired in Piazzetta Sant'Anna.

The hospital complex, which remained in use until 1912, owes its fame to Torquato Tasso who was shut away there because of his supposed madness from 1579 to 1586.

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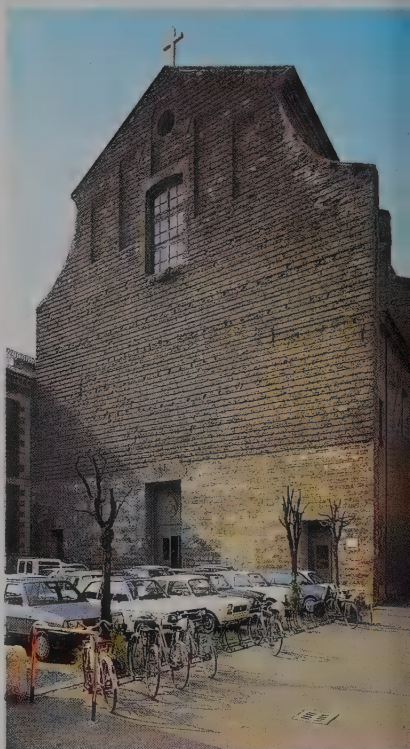
1. Communal Theatre: interior; 2. Church of Saint Charles; 3. Interior; 4. Palace Roverella: Courtyard seen from the porch.



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but it is here reinterpreted in an individual, wholly «Ferrarese» manner.

Opposite this building, note the **Church of Santa Maria dei Teatini** by Luca Danesi (C. 1620), a fine example of the sober elegance of baroque architecture.

Palace Roverella. 1. Façade; 2. Detail of the façade; 3. Church of Santa Maria dei

Teatini; 4. Palazzina di Marfisa d'Este. Façade; 5. Effigy of Marfisa.



MARFISA D'ESTE'S VILLA

Further along the street, after the pleasant wall that encloses the university building, we find the Villa of Marfisa d'Este.

The villa and the adjoining «loggia degli aranci» («orange gallery») are of great interest; originally they formed part of a larger complex of buildings and gardens in which lived Marfisa d'Este, daughter of Francesco d'Este and wife of Alderano Cybo, Marquis of Massa and Carrara.

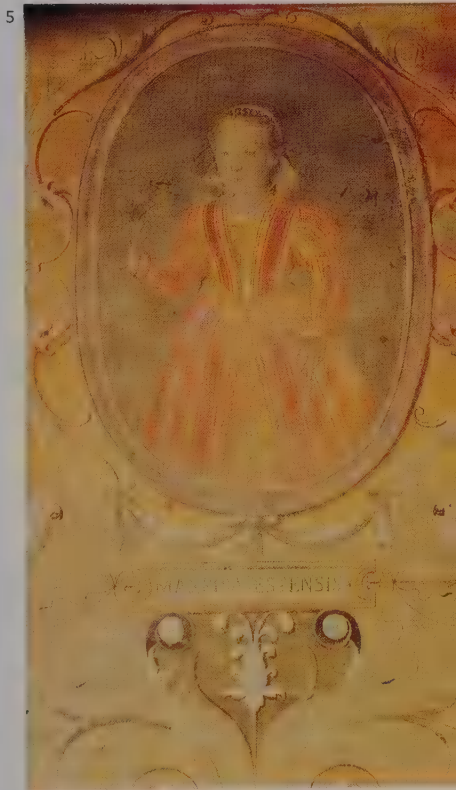
The Villa was constructed around 1559 by an unknown architect and the interior decorated by Camillo Filippi and his sons Sebastiano (il Bastianino) and Cesare; after Marfisa's death in 1608 the complex deteriorated rapidly until, after two cycles of restoration work (1910-1915 and 1937-1938), it was rescued and opened to the public.

Renovation work was carried out on both the fabric of the building and the fine ceilings; these latter were in such bad condition that in some cases Giuseppe Mazzolani, Enrico Gilberti and, later, Augusto Pagliarini had not simply to restore but to repaint them.

One example of this may be seen in the banquet hall where

the extensive restoration work, though it follows Filippi's scheme, reveals the taste and the hand of Pagliarini.

The Villa houses a small collection of objets d'art of mainly





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Venetian origin (furniture, paintings, sculptures), assembled around 1938 by Nino Barbantini.

Though this is not an exact

reconstruction of a Ferrara dwelling of the 16th century, but only a collection of pieces (some of which are of great value), the overall impression is a pleasant one.

The vaulted ceiling of the «loggia degli aranci», access to which is through the garden, is decorated as an arbour with vine-shoots and animals.

The street ends with an architectural **perspective** that makes an attractive backdrop. The 18th-century layout is by Francesco Mazzarelli, while the side adjuncts are of this century when the street itself was widened.

Palazzina di Marfisa d'Este. 1. Garden; 2. Main room; 3. View of Corso Giovecca.

THE RENAISSANCE CITY

THE ADDIZIONE ERCOLEA

As has already been stated, the city of Ferrara is centered around two areas which in morphological terms are quite distinct.

In approximately 1490, Duke Ercole I entrusted Biagio Rossetti with the task of enlarging the city of Ferrara. In its essentials, this was already accomplished by 1500: the city walls had been extended, the main streets had been traced, the first palaces and convents had been erected, the mediaeval walls to the north had been pulled down, and Via della Giovecca had been laid in their place. The new plan with its additions was dubbed the «Addizione Ercolea».

Many different factors prompted the Duke to launch this undertaking, unique in the history of the Italian Renaissance states. Firstly, it was essential to defend a particular area, to the north of the city, which was already partially inhabited (the Carthusian monastery, the Delizia di Belfiore, and various other

buildings were already in place), and which might otherwise all too easily be occupied by the Venetian enemy. Already, in the aftermath of the 1482-84 war, the huge Rovigo possessions had had to be given up to the Venetians. Secondly, Ercole I, implementing a policy designed to encourage the influx of Jews, set out to create a populous and economically prosperous city, which would accordingly require sufficient «living space». Last but not least, the Duke was driven by the desire to turn the city of the Este family into a grand capital, supplying it with fine buildings and churches, i.e. an aristocratic district that would bring him prestige and celebrity.

Rossetti embodied in architecture the Duke's resolve, creating a city which, though quite different from the mediaeval core, is not so far removed from it as is often a «rich district» from a «poor district». An essential point in this respect is the fact that Biagio Rossetti did not build a city cut off from the previous one, as he might have done had he taken as models the contemporary theories regarding the



«ideal city», which had to possess either a centric (symmetrical) plan, or at the very least a rectangular chess-board pattern. Nor did he seek to apply the theories of the treatise-writers, which would have imposed a radial plan fanning out from the city's «hub», the Castle. Given the fact that Rossetti must certainly have been aware of the work of the theorists of his time, and considering his skill as a pragmatic builder, we have to conclude that he consciously chose not to adopt a text-book city plan. Although he had both the ability and the means to do so, he evidently preferred to view the city as an organism and to seek to match or suit the «new style» to the «old style» - the architectural traditions of which he had always respected.

This new Ferrara therefore featured an irregular walled boundary, skirting around land that the Duke had appropriated for the State in 1490, and which was earmarked for development. There are two principal axes at right angles to one another: **Via degli Angeli** (now called Corso Ercole I d'Este) linking the Castle to the northern city gate; and **Via dei Prioni** (now known as Corso Porta Po, corso Biagio Rossetti, and Corso Porta Mare), running from Porta San Benedetto on the west to Porta San Giovanni on the east.

Along Via dei Prioni, there are two landmarks that stand out: the Church of Saint Benedict towards the western end and the «piazza nuova» (now called Piazza Ariostea) towards the eastern end. The square was designed to break up and lighten the city's north-south axis (Via degli Angeli), which, given that it led away from the castle, from the outset inevitably had to support the heaviest concentration of buildings (it is of course no accident that the homes of the most important personages of the Este court were built along this street).

As regards the other streets of the «Ercole Addition», it is worth noting the way in which, as a result of Rossetti's city plan, they branch off the Via della Giovecca towards the north in perfect alignment with the earlier streets of the Mediaeval core, thus creating a natural meeting-point between the two parts of the city. Even if not all of the streets were opened up by Rossetti, it is obvious that his plan laid the foundations for the organic development of the city, so that each successive step taken could blend in harmoniously with Ercole's renovation.

Another of the plan's merits was that it was drawn up with such «grandeur» that the area enclosed within the walls was able to contain the growth of the city right up until the 1950s. Until that date there still remained large areas of «green belt», once gardens and allotments, an example of which may still be seen in the splendid district surrounding the Carthusian Charterhouse to the north-east of the city.

Lastly, a further point should be made for those who are intrigued by this crucial characteristic of Ferrara, and who would like to find out more. If you follow any one of the inner streets of the «Addition», chosen at random, you will never arrive at anything that might be considered a landmark, visible from far off, inviting you to stop and rest for a moment. Rather you will always arrive at a crossing with another street or at a square, at which you are seemingly enjoined to proceed further in one of the several possible directions. This sensation can be experienced, for example, as one strolls down Via Frescobaldi or Via Mascheraio or Via Palestro, making for the highly attractive Piazza Ariostea.

The layout of the «Addition» is strikingly atypical for a Renaissance city (consider, by way of contrast, Sextus V's plan of Rome, structured around long straight lines marked at their beginnings and ends by obelisks and monuments). This atypically-

Aerial view. The line Giovecca-Cavour separates the renaissance city (on the right) from the medieval city (on the left).

ty enables the «Addition» to draw closer, as it were, to the older part of the city, while reminding us of the cultural background of Biagio Rossetti, a man of the Renaissance no doubt, but at the same time a discerning observer of the past.

CORSO ERCOLE I D'ESTE

Anyone determined not to miss any of the charms of sixteenth-century Ferrara should examine the entire length of the principal axis of the «Ercole's Addition», the Corso Ercole I D'Este, from the Castle to the Porta degli Angeli. Numerous important buildings, parks, and gardens line this street. The final section, partially marred by more modern constructions, should be visited on foot in order to discover how the city gradually gives way to the countryside, which appears to enter the city from beyond the walls. It is an «abstract» phenomenon, almost unreal, but should be experienced.

Along the street the following buildings are worth noting: **Palazzo del Monte di Pietà.** Built following a design by Agapito Poggi and Domenico Santini around 1760, it features a huge courtyard, later covered over.

The elegant boundary wall and



portal, attributed to Biagio Rossetti, of the **Giglioli-Varano** palazzo.

The palazzo of **Giulio d'Este**, brother of Duke Alfonso I, later the property of the Pio princes. This work too has been at-



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tributed to Rossetti owing to the Renaissance façade, the way in which the spaces are drawn together towards the garden, and the care taken over the traditional Ferrarese terracotta decorations.

Palazzo Camerini. Certainly one of Ferrara's most interesting eighteenth-century buildings, in part owing to the interior decorations: this building was erected by Antonio Tosi in around 1830 to a plan drawn up by Pividor.

The **crossroads «degli Angeli»**. Where the ancient Via Prioni and Via degli Angeli meet. Bordering this road intersection, there stand four characteristic buildings which however differ greatly in terms of both quality and size; this is a typically «Rossettian» trick designed to eliminate any possible sense of immobility, using the different masses of the buildings to encourage the passer-by to choose

between the various directions open to him.

The **Palazzo Turchi di Bagno** (1493). Also designed by Biagio Rossetti, it uses an austere pilaster strip to accentuate the corner only on the simple surface of the building's facade.

PALAZZO DEI DIAMANTI AND THE PINACOTECA NAZIONALE

The «Palace of Diamonds», situated on the south-west corner of the crossroads, is certainly the most singular and impressive building of «Ercole's Addition». Indeed, its marble shell is so striking and unusual as to make it unique in the architectural context of Ferrara.

Biagio Rossetti is traditionally credited with the design of the Palace, which was begun in 1493 by order of Sigismondo d'Este, a brother of Duke Ercole I. Building was interrupted in 1504 when Rossetti and his collaborator Gabriele Frisoni left the project, and was only completed in 1567. The Palace remained in the possession of the Este family

Corso Ercole 1° d'Este. 1. Portal of Palace Giglioli-Varano; 2. Palace of Giulio d'Este; 3. Palace Camerini (19th c.); 4. Palace Turchi di Bagno (15th c.). P. 88-89 Palace of Diamonds.



even after their departure from Ferrara (1598), but was taken over by the Marquises of Villa who made a number of alterations, including the addition of a decorated portal.

The exterior owes its imposing appearance not only to the building's own expressive features but also to the architect's marked flair for city

planning and perspective effects. The more than eight thousand five hundred ashlar of diamond-pointed rustication, seemingly all identical, are in fact arranged with great care so that the axes of their vertices are only perpendicular to the façade across the middle; in the top part of the façade, on the other hand, the axes of the vertices are turn-



ed upwards, and at the base, the axes slope downward. The jutting-out of the «diamonds» and their systematically «staggered» arrangement from one row to the next, gives the marble mass a very sculptural appearance. This effect is mitigated however by the way in which the building's corner is, as it were, broken up by the small balcony

and the pilaster strips decorated by Gabriele Frisoni.

The movement of the façade inherent in such an unusual facing is in this case carried over by the dynamic function of its decorative whole, which is sensitive and intimately related to its surroundings. This «relation» effect is typical of Rossetti's work, and may be found in many



history of Ferrarese art from the thirteenth to the eighteenth-century. Owing, however, to the amount of material that has been lost over the years, the great «Ferrarese atelier» of the fifteenth century is very poorly represented. To view this, apart from the circular paintings depicting the stories of Saint Maurelio, it is best to examine Schifanoia's Cycle of Months.

The exhibition rooms themselves have decorated ceilings that are of considerable interest. These include the ceilings of the grandiose hall of honour, consisting of coffers (sunken panels), and those of the south wing with its central panels from the Convent of Saint Anthony in Polesine depicting a Madonna and Child and God the Father (fifteenth century). In the three rooms following the grand hall in the north wing, the ceilings have bands painted with lively and elegant grotesques dating from the end of the sixteenth century. The ceiling panels, now empty, once contained paintings by Scarsellino, Carracci and Cavazzone: these were moved to Modena by the Este family before they gave the palace up to the Villa family (1630).

In the way the Picture Gallery is currently arranged, the entrance gallery with the portraits of the Marquises of Villa leads into the main hall where the large fresco of the Triumph of Saint Augustine, attributed to the Modenese Serafino dei Serafini (second half of the fourteenth century), is displayed. Also on show are the frescoes (originating in the church of the Abbey of Saint Bartholomew) representing the New Testament stories. Depictions of the Evangelists by an unknown thirteenth-century artist are also displayed: these make use of popular Benedictine and Byzantine-like motifs to create an idiom that has no parallels in Italian painting of the period.

other of his buildings.

The «Civic Gallery of Modern Art» is situated on the ground floor of the building. This gallery holds periodic exhibitions of leading contemporary artists. The National Picture Gallery is on the piano nobile.

The Picture Gallery (Pinacoteca), initially municipal only was established in 1836 with the purpose of recovering paintings that were removed from those city churches that were unable to guarantee their preservation. Later acquisitions, detached frescoes, bequests and gifts have considerably enriched the collection of the Gallery, which gained national status in 1956.

Today, as one walks through the exhibition rooms, one is confronted with what is in effect a

Palace of Diamonds. Art Gallery. 1. Portal; 2. Portico on courtyard; 3. North room with ceiling late 16th c.; 4. Virgin with child (15th c.), ceiling by S. Antonio in Polesine.



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Also in the hall is exhibited the «Allegory of the Old and New Testament» by Garofalo.

The grand hall leads into three other large rooms where the collection of paintings owned by the Cassa di Risparmio (Savings Bank) of Ferrara is stored. There are roughly eighty works altogether, including canvases, tablets and frescoes of local interest. These include works by Garofalo, by Girolamo da Carpi, by Bastianino, by Scarsellino, by Carlo Bononi and by other artists who marked the most significant stages in the development of the Ferrarese school of painting.

In the series of halls flanking Corso Biagio Rossetti, works of the sixteenth-century Ferrarese school are permanently displayed: apart from the paintings of Vittore Carpaccio (Dormitio Virginis «Death of the Virgin», 1508) and of Ortolano, of Mazzolino, of Bononi, etc, the paintings in this section of the gallery are mostly the work of Garofalo — to whom the second room is wholly devoted — and of Battista and Dosso Dossi.

Of the works of Garofalo, special mention must be made of the «Slaughter of the Innocents» (1519), the «Finding of the True Cross» (1534) — showing the evident influence of Raphael

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and the Mannerists, combined with the vivid Venetian-School colours — and, lastly, the «Adoration of the Magi» and «Nativity» (1513).

In the last hall, the large *Costabili Polyptych*, begun by Garofalo in 1530 and executed with the collaboration of Dosso Dossi, is on display. The Madonna



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the Este court. The drama of the second scene presents us once again with the harsh and inhospitable landscape that is one of Tura's well-known characteristics.

with Child and Seven Saints, the central altar-piece, is encircled by panels depicting Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, Saint Sebastian and Saint George, and, above, Christ Resurrected.

The Vendeghini-Baldi collection of Renaissance paintings is exhibited in the south wing of the palazzo, which can be reached directly from the gallery. These paintings include works by Ercole de Roberti, Gentile da Fabriano, and Garofalo. Further on one can pause to admire the halls that display fourteenth — and fifteenth — century paintings, including works by Cristoforo da Bologna, Simone dei Crocifissi, Vicino da Ferrara, etc. Of these the most outstanding are two circular paintings depicting the Judgement of Saint Maurelio and the Martyrdom of Saint Maurelio from the saint's altar-piece in the Church of Saint George. Both paintings, by Cosmè Tura, reveal the high figurative and spatial quality achieved by the «Ferrarese atelier» thanks to its great master. In the first scene, the figures move within a strict perspective adorned and refined by pageboys and little monkeys, recalling the elegance of life at

Palace of Diamonds. Art Gallery. 1. Benvenuto Tisi da Garofalo: *Virgin on the throne and Saints* (14th c.); 2. Saint George and the dragon, detail of the *Costabili polyptych* (16th c.); 3. Cosmè Tura: *Judgement of Saint Maurelius*; 4. Cosmè Tura: *Beheading of Saint Maurelius*; detail (15th c.).



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PALAZZO PROSPERI-SACRATI

Situated opposite the «Palace of Diamonds», the Palazzo Prosperi Sacrati has been renowned ever since the sixteenth century above all for its portal. This stands out not only for its position vis-à-vis the surrounding roads and buildings, affording a sense of dynamism to the *Crossroads of the Angels*, but also for its evidently Venetian-style composition and decorations.

Recent restoration work has recovered the portal's sophisticated use of the white-pink-grey colour scheme, and has made it possible once again to examine the friezes, decorated with intricate moulding patterns as well as its sculpted sections. Despite the damage and mutilation suffered during the war (in particular, the cupids and monkeys adorning the balcony balustrade were lost), the portal remains one of the most outstanding examples of Ferrarese architectural sculpture of the sixteenth century. Nineteenth-



century artistic historiography deemed the portal to be the work of major artists, including even the Tuscan Baldassarre Peruzzi. Given the portal's typically Venetian aspect, the work might however be attributed, albeit with some uncertainty, to Antonio and Aurelio Solari-Lombardo.

Apart from the historical and artistic value of the portal, the importance of its «position», which may confidently be ascribed to Biagio Rossetti's genius for city-planning, should once again be emphasized. Rossetti, when it came to designing the crossroads, instead of drawing up a symmetrically organized plan, preferred to polarise attention on two elements of particular expressive quality (the Palace of Diamonds with its balcony, and the Prosperi-Sacрати portal), which clearly emerge from the many sober-looking, almost anonymous, buildings that surround them. The deliberate dynamism of this composition, which achieves its effect by means of contrast and

surprises, is quite apparent, even¹ if somewhat mitigated by the corner balcony of the Prosperi-Sacрати building, a rather self-indulgent nineteenth-century addition.

Further down Corso Ercole I d'Este the following buildings are worth noting:

The Trotti-Mosti Palace: of great interest both for its architectural features, which are typical of sixteenth-century Ferrara, and also for the decorations dating from a variety of periods which have been recovered during the recent work of restoration. Particular mention must be made of the Aula Magna, with its coffered ceiling and frescoed band, sixteenth-century decorated ceilings and Liberty decorations.

The Guarini-Giordani Palace: attributed to Alessandro Biondo,

1. *Palace Prosperi-Sacрати; 2. Polychrome portal.*



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one of Rossetti's collaborators, this building has a front that was extended «in style» in 1903. Together with Palazzo Trotti-Mosti, it is today the University Faculty of Law. From this point on the street is less and less built up. Further on, after enjoying

the partial view of the Carthusian monastery from Piazzale Borso, one can walk along the stretch called Via dei Pionponi (literally: «Street of the Tall Poplars») given to the street from here to the Porta degli Angeli at the city walls.



THE CHURCH OF SAINT CHRISTOPHER AT THE CHARTERHOUSE

The Carthusian monks settled in 1461 in this area, which at that time was outside the city's walls. They did so at the behest of Duke Borso who commissioned Pietrobono Brasavola to build the monastery with the large cloister, which still stands. Not long after, while Ercole I was Duke, work began on the present church. The building was completed in 1551, though the façade remained bare. The portal was added in the late eighteenth century.

The attribution of the church to Biagio Rossetti, although not backed by any documentary evidence, is on historical and stylistic grounds convincing,

even if the overall appearance of the building varies so markedly from that of his earlier works (San Francesco, Santa Maria in Vado, San Benedetto). On this particular occasion, Rossetti made use of a wholly experimental plan, entailing a single nave with side chapels. He presumably derived inspiration for this design from Leon Battista Alberti, and especially from his work in Mantua. The organisation of the design into quadrangular domed modules reproduced in the transept and the chancel, and also the proportional relation with the chapels, indicate that the planning approach is the same, even if it is implemented here on a different kind of layout.

The technique for distributing natural light, already used by Rossetti, called for high windows in the nave and double windows in the chapels, thereby ensuring diffused and congenial lighting. In the presbytery area, on the other hand, the deep choir is flooded with light, providing a strong contrast with the darkness of the triumphal arch and the windowless dome.

The lower order that frames the chapels, and the upper one that serves to punctuate the bays of the nave, have the effect of breaking up the wall while providing a simple yet sophisticated decoration.





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The handling of the façade is also of considerable interest. Here large pilasters are used to accent the large module and small arches decorated with terracotta to stress their internal sections. The same decorative motif is used again on the campanile, which was rebuilt only a few decades ago.

For several years the church has been closed for restoration and it will doubtless be impossible to visit it properly arrayed with its works of art in the near future. For the time being, these are kept in the city's museums. Under the present circumstances, it will suffice to mention that Bastianino, Bastarolo, Niccolò Roselli and other late sixteenth-century artists produced paintings for this church.

This large church is now situated in a charming setting which, notwithstanding the construction of the monumental cemetery, begun in 1813 following a plan by Ferdinando Canonici, cannot have changed all that much since the time of the Estes. The church dominates the open green area that stretches as far as the city walls. Visitors sensitive to the unique atmosphere of Ferrara should make sure they visit a little-known corner that lets you view the church in all its inspiring splendour. You should make your way to Via delle Vigne (the last section of Via Montebello) and, at the entrance to the Jewish cemetery, turn left down the unpaved road. From this vantage point, among the cultivated fields and tumble-down walls, one can gain a surprising view of the Carthusian monastery, farmhouses, the Jewish cemetery, the last unspoilt corner of 16th-century Ferrara — the natural and urban landscapes join in a seapless continuum.

San Cristoforo alla Certosa. 1. Lateral portico and church; 2. Access to lateral portico; 3. Graveyard.



THE MASSARI PARK AND PALACE

As well as the Palace itself and its various annexes, the Massari grounds also boast a large public park, landscaped in the mid-nineteenth century in Romantic style, and still well - appointed with a splendid flora.

The Palace was erected towards the end of the sixteenth century by the Bevilacqua family, who continued to change and modify the building throughout the centuries that followed. In the nineteenth century the new owners, the dukes of Massari, further embellished the building. As a result, the interior now contains stuccoes, and frescoed ceilings and a variety of decorations from the beginning of the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century. Overall, the palace interior, even if it is not representative of the era of the Este family's greatest splendor, provides nonetheless a good example of a noble residence, in which changes and additions made at different times coexist in harmony.

The Civic Museum of Modern

Art is now based in the buildings attached to the Palace, which also house other temporary activities related to the museum. In particular, the piano nobile is given over to a collection of the most significant nineteenth- and twentieth-century Ferrarese painters, including Filippo de Pisis. On the ground floor there is a documentary section on «metaphysical painting», covering the main stages in the history of this great artistic movement. Special attention is paid to De Chirico whose works are reproduced in a series of colour slides, since the originals are scattered all over the globe.

Also in the so - called Palazzina dei Cavalieri di Malta («Palace of the Knights of Malta»), there is an exhibition of nineteenth-century artists, including approximately 150 works by Giovanni Boldini (1842-1931).

PIAZZA ARIOSTEA

We have already considered the role played by this square as a gravitational pole within the Ercole Addition. However, it is worth taking a closer look at



² various other aspects of Rossetti's plan.

Since this is the «new» square, the most significant piece of open space in the whole of the Addition, the visitor naturally expects it to be encircled with important landmark buildings. Surprisingly, however, the square is instead a green area overlooked by simple, and in some ways distinctly «popular», buildings.

The only ones worthy of note are the **Palazzo Rondinelli** and the **Strozzi-Bevilacqua buildings**. In both these Rossetti used the portico, an element in the local tradition, as a way of «filtering» the transition between the empty outside space and the construction itself. Rossetti's very special sensitivity, his awareness of the function of buildings in the broader city context, is eloquently demonstrated by the way the porticoes are aligned with the streets that lead into the square. It is worth taking a careful look at the Strozzi-Bevilacqua portico. As

can be seen, this constitutes a point of encounter (and mediation) between present-day Via Palestro and Via Borso, leading to the Carthusian monastery.

The present-day appearance of the square dates back to roughly 1930. The late nineteenth-century statue of Ludovico Ariosto now stands in the place of other earlier statues (of Pope Alexander III, of Liberty, and of Napoleon) which have taken their turns in line with political developments.



1. Corso Porta Mare. Palace Massari; 2. Piazza Ariosteana, in the background, Palace Rondinelli; 3. Palace Bevilacqua.



1 **PALAZZO NASELLI-CRISPI**

Planned by Girolamo da Carpi in approximately 1530, this building is absolutely unique in Ferrara. One may appreciate, especially in the courtyard, the classical scheme derived from examples of Roman architecture which, while congenial to Girolamo, gained little following among most Ferrarese architects. Indeed, no other building may be found in the city in which the use of the overlaid architectural order is conceived, as is here, with such up-to-date references to classical architecture.

The very recent restoration of this building has reasserted the contrast between the brickwork and the imitation stone of the order, highlighting the elegance of the composition.

In the brickwork façades with alternating triangular and elliptical tympana windows, we find a prototype which, adjusted to suit local tastes, enjoyed a certain popularity throughout the second half of the sixteenth century.



2 **CHIESA DEL GESÙ**

Planned around 1570, this church, even though it was subsequently remodelled, has preserved in the layout of its façade the typical forms of late sixteenth-century Ferrarese architecture. This façade was, it appears, the work of Alberto Schiatti. Inside, among the other works of art, the famous Mortorio, made by Guido Mazzoni in 1485, stands out.

Against the polychrome terracotta background, human figures writhing in a torment that is expressed with a sort of violent despair, surround the dead Christ. In the figures' contorted faces, the artist's reference to the conventional mime of popular theatre is apparent, as are the echoes of Tura's dramatic sensibility. On the right-hand side among these figures, Duke Ercole I and Duchess Eleonora of Aragon may be seen, who, in this sacred representation, portray Joseph of Arimathea and Mary of Cleophas.

1. Via Borgo Leoni. Palace Naselli-Crispi;
2. Piazza T. Tasso. Church of Jesus; 3. Corso Porta Po. Church of San Benedetto;
4. Cloister.



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SAN BENEDETTO

This large Benedictine complex, begun at the end of the fifteenth century, has unfortunately been severely damaged over the centuries, especially during the bombardments of the Second World War. As a result, the church that now stands is an almost total reconstruction, boldly undertaken between 1952 and 1953, of the one built by Rossetti. The cold appearance of the resulting building, due to the roughness of the new material, creates an unfavourable effect, and makes one wonder whether complete reconstruction is

always fully justified. It should not, however, be forgotten that the church, and especially the flank that overlooks the street, played a role within the overall scheme of particular landmarks in the «Ercole Addition», which was of such fundamental and essential importance. Therefore, however much it may be an «architectural forgery», the visitor is recommended to enter this church and to devote some thought to this space and to Rossetti.

As is the case with the churches of Saint Francis and of Santa Maria in Vado, here too the Renaissance scheme of composi-

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tion is evident. The interior in fact consists of an aggregation of the square base modules, used in the bays of the nave, transept and apse. The modules of the aisles and chapels are only half as long and broad as the base module. This means that the quantity of chapels is, as it were, automatically determined. This follows the plan of the two churches previously mentioned. Here, however, the concatenation of geometrical elements is rigorous even in the transept and apse, where the central dome is encircled by three exactly identical modular spaces. The resulting area is at once compact and outlined with effective clarity.

As with San Francesco, the aisles are lit from the windows located to the sides of the chapels. The semicircular shape of the chapels, inspired by the work of Brunelleschi, helps to diffuse the light, thereby softening the dramatic *chiaro-scuro* of the Franciscan church.

Of the decorations that survived the church's collapse under bombardment during the Second World War, one should note the «four evangelists» of the nave pendentives, the work of Ludovico Settevecchi (sixteenth century).

On the way out of the church, one may pause to admire the campanile built by Giovan Battista Aleotti. Ever since it was erected in 1621, this slender and simple tower has been one of the most significant urban landmarks of the «Ercole Addition», playing a role similar to that of the castle towers and the campanile of the church of Saint George.

Many sections of the huge several-cloistered monastery — another victim of wartime bombardment — have been lost, and many of those parts that remain are now encircled by squalid post-war constructions.

Two cloisters that still possess a number of decorated rooms may still be visited — even though they are in a very poor state of repair.



THE HOUSE OF LUDOVICO ARIOSTO

«Parva sed apta mihi; sed nulli obnoxia sed non sordida; parta meo sed tamen aere domus».

This sentence, engraved on the cornice sums up the relation of perfect symbiosis existing between the house and its owner, the poet Ariosto. Having reached his mature years, Ariosto ordered the house to be built, perhaps to a design by Girolamo da Carpi, in order to withdraw there to compose the final draft of his *Orlando Furioso*. The sentence in Latin expresses his view of the house: «Small but suited to me... and made with my own money», but also reveals the poet's reserved character and the pride he felt in his moral and material freedom. The sober sixteenth-century front (to which his son, Virgilio, had a plate added, that reads: «Sic domus haec Areosta propitios deos habeat olim ut pindarica»), the distribution of the spaces inside the house, the wooden floors, the small courtyard, still today emanate a tranquil and meditative atmosphere. It was the image of a house as refuge, simple and dignified. The grounds included a large vegetable garden, that occupied the poet's free time. This building, which was purchased by the Municipality of Ferrara in the mid - eighteenth century, is now used as a branch library for the district.

THE CITY WALLS

The tour of the fortified circle of walls is a still largely unknown excursion tour in Ferrara. It is however to be recommended not only for its intrinsic historical interest, in terms of military architecture, but also for the beauty of the landscape, most striking and enjoyable on the northern and eastern sides of the city. It is unthinkable that any tourist who has appreciated the mediaeval city and admired the broad streets of the «Herculean Addition» should complete his tour of the Ferrara of the Este Family before experiencing the rarefied and almost timeless atmosphere of the city walls.

The layout of the whole structure, built over a time-span of approximately two centuries, has survived almost unscathed. Most of the ramparts can be visited as can large stretches of the embankment even though parts of the walls (the Pontifical fortress, the bastion of San Rocco, the gates of Saint Benedict, Saint George, Saint John, and others) were demolished from the 17th century onwards. These features make the city walls the largest and most suggestive park in Ferrara, a delightful blend of history and nature.

The lengthy time span that was required to complete the definitive structure of the city walls, renovating them and adapting them step by step to the requirements of defence, has resulted in a certain typological variation between different sections. This can be seen most clearly if one compares the section built by Rossetti and the southern bastions of Alfonso II. Despite this variation, the whole of the Ferrara circle of walls may be classified as an example of what historians term the «Italian-style bastioned front».



Before launching into a more detailed description of the walls, it should be emphasized that the city's defences until mediaeval times consisted essentially of very high but relatively thin battlement walls, interrupted by towers that were usually square, and encircled by a moat. This pattern, basically unchanged until the fifteenth century, underwent a radical alteration when firearms became so powerful that they constituted a serious threat to the very stability of the walls, which being high were all the more easily pierced and demolished.

From the last decades of the fifteenth century onwards, walls were therefore built lower. The outer sloped curtains (stretches of wall between towers) were reinforced on the inside by very thick ramparts designed to serve as bulwarks; on the outside the moat and more raised ramparts assured further protection. A fundamental element in this system was the bulwark or bastion, consisting of an advance block placed before the wall curtain. Initially, these bulwarks were circular in cross-section, but later assumed the more «classical» pentagonal or «ace of spades» form.

The function of the bastion was to interrupt the curtain sections, in such a way as to present to the enemy a surface that was not straight, thus causing their gunshot to be deflected. This accounts for the variety of forms assumed by the bastions, never situated parallel to the walls. The bastions also lodged at their top the artillery emplacements, and in their sides the so-called

1. Via Ariosto. House of Ludovico Ariosto; 2. Path bordered with trees on the ramparts of the Angels.



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«traitor pieces»: from these could be fired flank shots skimming the curtain walls, thereby defending their straight sections.

The whole course of development affecting later types of the bastion is represented in the city walls of Ferrara, from the most rudimentary form of turret known as the «Torrione del Barco» (built in approximately 1492) to the most elaborate bastion built by Alfonso II (post 1560).

The Rossetti Walls. In chronological order, leaving aside the very few sections remaining of the Borso wall to the south, all of which were radically altered after 1560, one finds the walls of the Herculean Addition, which encircle in an almost trapezoidal form (from the present-day Porta Po to Corso Giovecca) the late fifteenth-century expansion of the city.

Under the direction of Biagio Rossetti, assisted by Alessandro Biondo, the city, having abandoned the old circle that ran along the line of the present-day Corso Giovecca, was supplied with walls with a «modern design» after 1491. The section of the quadrilateral that is certainly the work of Rossetti runs from

the Torrione del Barco (north-west vertex) to the Gate of Saint John (the Gate to the Sea). This is certainly one of the most striking stretches of the wall, as well as being of a most singular design: it has a sloping wall curtain, a bastion detached from the wall, and small round turrets. The whole construction is surrounded by a large green area, retracing the perimeter of the original moat. Focal points include the circular topped bulwarks, of which the north-eastern one, known as the «Duke's rotunda», no longer exists, and the gates: the one known as the Gate of Angels, situated approximately half-way round the northern side, traditionally held to have been closed off after the exodus of the Este family and their followers from the city (1598), and the Gate of Saint John, of which only the great circular turret remains.

Many parts of the curtain walls in this section were rebuilt during the course of the eighteenth century, and a number of intermediate small turrets have disappeared. Rossetti's design has not however been substantially altered by the changes, and not even the large-scale destruction that long decades of abandonment have wrought on the



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wall surfaces has succeeded in destroying the significance of the walls as a primary example of «a bastioned front».

If one follows the ramparts one cannot help but be struck by the harmonious relation existing between the city walls and the surrounding territory, whether one looks out into the countryside (towards the Duke's Bark—once the private hunting ground of the Este family), or towards the city itself where one can still espy broad stretches of free land, the eighteenth-century Jewish cemetery, and the Certosa buildings: a series of delightful and charming vistas.

The Walls of Alfonso I. From the Gate of Saint John, towards the south, run the more typically fifteenth-century walls with steeper scarp-backed ramparts. The first section, as far as the Gate of Saint George (no longer

extant), was built by Alfonso I between 1512 and 1518. Among other interesting features, there are the triangular bulwark of Saint Thomas, and the bulwark «Of the Mountain». The latter derives its name from the large earth embankment created to form a cavalier, i.e. a raised artillery position. From the edge of this bulwark one can admire the «Ducal Baths», attributed to Girolamo da Carpi.

In this section, as in that further to the north, the bed of the ancient moat can still be traced in precise relation to the walls. By contrast, in the area adjacent to the former Gate of Saint George (now the city's exit in the direction of Ravenna), this relation has been wholly lost as a result of the numerous constructions that have been erected on the ramparts.

The Walls of Alfonso II. The last constructions that the Este family undertook in order to extend the city's fortifications were the southern bastions. Remaining still intact is the sequence of those bastions built in order to reinforce the «Borso» walls (proceeding clockwise: the Bulwark of Love, of Saint Anthony and of Saint Peter). These bastions, built

1. *Torrione del Barco (keep), defensive rampart facing north; 2. Detail of the Curtain bordered with cable moulded beams; 3. Fortified wall by Rossetti. Curtain and bastions north of Porta S. Giovanni; 4. Part of the wall and keep of Porta S. Giovanni; 5. Carthusian monastery and Israelites graveyard as seen from the wall.*



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on the initiative of the last Duke, Alfonso II, in approximately 1580, are splendid examples of a defensive art that had by this time reached maturity. Indeed, they were provided with technical features which for those times were very modern: their «ace of spades», i.e. recessed star shape; the special postings for raking fire; their internal service and manoeuvre rooms; and their summit artillery emplacements.

Whereas the structures are on the whole quite well preserved, the embankment and rampart have been tampered with in re-



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cent times. This detracts from the overall interest of the area.

The remaining part of the walls may still be visited, but has lost forever those features that make the aforementioned sections famous. The last faint trace of the transformations effected by the Papal Government of the early seventeenth century, following the destruction of the mighty fortress in the mid-nineteenth century, is the Paola Gate, erected in 1612 by Gian Battista Aleotti as a monumental approach from Bologna.

The imposing papal fortress, which was finished in 1610, was demolished in the 1800s. This loss weakened the city's defenses as it had been one of the key elements, with its five-point star plan and complex layout of bastions, ramparts and ditches. The last two remaining bastions are Santa Maria and San Paolo.



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1. 18th century sentry box of the rampart of the Mountain, the only one remaining of many, whose function was to keep watch on the wall; 2. Porta Romana; 3. Wall of Borso and the rampart of Buon Amore; 4. Porta Paola; 5. Piazzale S. Giorgio. Overall view of the church; 6. Detail of the façade. Saint George killing the dragon, low relief.



5 SAINT GEORGE

During the period of Este rule, the Saint George group of buildings of Olivetan monks was a fully-fledged active and self-sufficient village, including a church, three interconnected cloisters, and a series of other secondary buildings. Unfortunately, the architectural distribution of this structure, similar to that of numerous other Benedictine communities, is now seriously impaired. Still standing, however, even if modified, are the church, the campanile, and the first cloister — which the friars still use to this day. As for the other parts of the complex, one can gain an idea by entering, off to the side of the building, the village. On the right-hand side stand the scant remains of the service buildings, once used as storehouses, cellars, workshops, etc. And, at the bottom of the lane, stands a building showing clear vestiges of the third cloister. All these buildings were turned into houses several decades ago.

Right down the centuries, however, the fate of Saint George seems to have been to alternate between splendor and

decadence, mutilations and restorations.

Ferrara's first episcopal seat (from the 7th century), Saint George's nonetheless declined rapidly following the consecration of the new cathedral of Saint George in 1135. Having lost its previous importance, the village was used less, and as a result its primitive architectural structures fell into such a state of disrepair that when Nicolò III d'Este granted Saint George's to the Olivetans in 1417, they had to rebuild both church and convent.

The fact that Biagio Rossetti, from 1473 on, took a hand in the work of renovating this cluster of buildings is borne out in





documentary evidence. Due to the subsequent alterations, however, Rossetti's architectural contribution can only be identified at a very few points: the sacristy, the layout of the first cloister, and the campanile. It is worth taking a careful look at the campanile before going in. Its function in the broader context of the village is evident: it serves as a landmark for those leaving the city as well as for those seeking to approach it from the surrounding countryside. This is all the more striking if one recalls that until the beginning of the fifteenth century the convent stood in total isolation, without any other buildings near it. When it came to drawing up a plan, Rossetti must have born in mind not only the examples provided by local mediaeval architecture, but also the cathedral campanile then under construction. Reference to the cathedral is in fact apparent in the division of the tower body into square blocks. On the other hand, rather than reproduce the vigorous sculptural style that Alberti had adopted for the cathedral (a manner fundamentally foreign to Ferrara), Rossetti opted for a smooth arrangement of surfaces that were relieved or «patterned» by means of angular pilaster strips and decorated cornices: a «meeting point» between old

and new, a common feature in Rossetti's architecture.

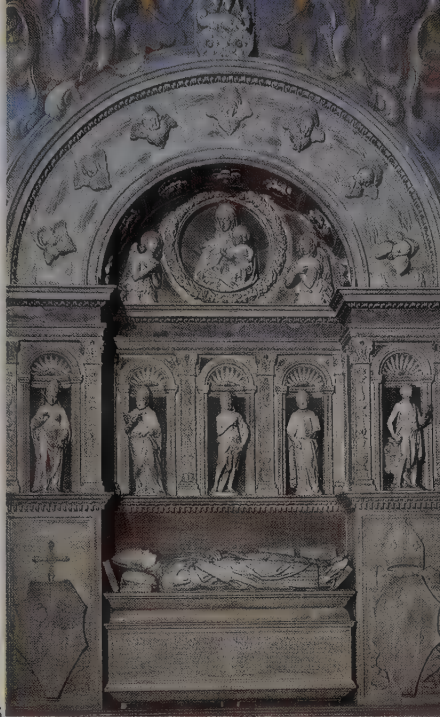
Of the fifteenth-century church, for which Cosmè Tura painted the Roverella (1475) and the Saint Maurelio (1479) altarpieces (both of which have been lost), not much is left. The present façade was reconstructed in the first half of the eighteenth century, set further back than the original one. The interior, rearranged in 1581 by Alberto Schiatti, was later decorated by seventeenth-century artists including, most notably, Francesco Ferrari.

Inside the church one can visit the famous tomb of Lorenzo Roverella, a Ferrarese bishop (1475). The complex architectural and sculptural design of this work is attributed to Antonio Rossellino, who also made the lunette depicting the Virgin Mary and the angels and sculpted the five statues of saints in the niches. The other parts of the tomb were the work of Ambrogio da Milano. Overall, the elegance of the composition of this tomb and the fine balance of the forms make it a landmark in fifteenth-century Emilian sculpture.

The three silver plates (1512) adorning the urn on the sepulchre of Saint Maurelio (chapel to the left of the apse) are also of outstanding artistic



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quality. They represent: Duke Alfonso I kneeling before Saint Maurelio; Duchess Lucrezia Borgia, followed by five ladies, presenting her firstborn Ercole to Saint Maurelio; and the Prior of the Olivetans of Saint George kneeling before the Saint. The Ducal family probably commissioned this work from Giovanni Antonio da Foligno as a way of giving thanks for the victory at Ravenna, in which Duke Alfonso had gained distinction alongside the Ferrarese artillery. The final plate is of special interest. In the background are depicted the city walls and the church of Saint George: one can see quite distinctly the tiered orders of the campanile, as well as the façade with its Venetian style upper half.



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Church of Saint George. 1. Cloister; 2. Interior; 3. Funeral monument of Corenzo Roverella; 4. Saint George victorious.



THE DELTA DEL PO

CASTLE OF MESOLA

The small town of Mesola is situated on the banks of the Delta's southern branch, the *Po di Goro*, where it is crossed by the ancient Romea Road.

The town clusters around the castle which, with its four-towered bulk, dominates both it and the surrounding countryside. The castle is immediately visible on approaching the small town along the avenue of poplars that one turns onto from the Via Romea.

Commissioned by Marchese Alfonso II d'Este, the Castle of Mesola was built between 1579 and 1583 as a hunting residence set in a vast reserve. Architect Giovan Battista Aleotti worked to a design by Marcantonio Pasi.

The building, on a square plan without an inner courtyard and with four battlemented towers positioned transversally at its corners, was constructed on three floors. Following a long period of abandonment, it has recently been renovated and converted for use as a cultural centre.

The outer courtyard is sur-

rounded by low buildings which once served as servants' quarters, stables, warehouses, and for other purposes related to everyday life in the castle. Nowadays several of these buildings are used as shops, public offices, and craft workshops.

The «Grande Delizia» remained in the possession of the Este family until 1785 when it was purchased by Pope Pius VI along with the «Woods of Mesola», a large reserve bounded by the Po di Goro, the Po di Volano and the sea.

WOODS OF MESOLA

These woods (part of which may be visited on Sundays and Bank Holidays) have now become a great natural reserve with a surface area of over 1,000 hectares. This safeguards part of a forest that once covered much of the province. The rich flora of this area is dominated by the holm oak.

The fauna is as plentiful and varied as its flora and includes: deer, fallow-deer, hares, badgers, and otters.

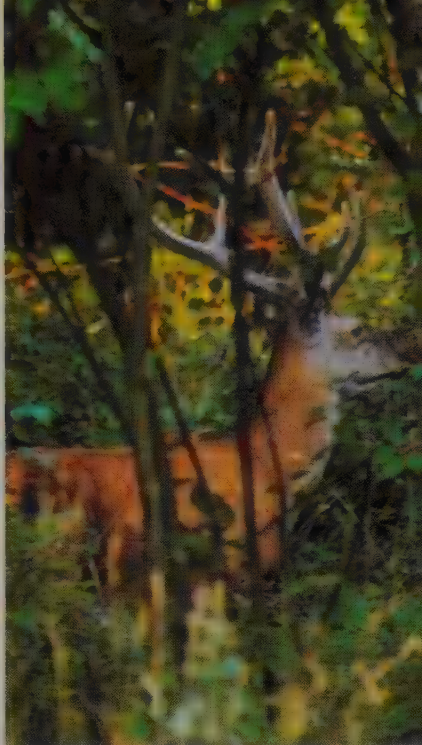
1. *Castello Estense di Mesola*; 2. *Deer in the woods of Mesola*; 3. *View of the port of Goro*.

SOUTHERN PO DELTA

A picture of the natural environment of the Po Delta may be completed by pressing on further towards Goro and Gorino, following the banks of the Po di Goro, into contryside where the principal element is water.

The whole area was once marshy, and all that could be seen were cane-brakes and the occasional fishing-hut. The prevalent activity was fishing, and the technique used was that of the «*lavoriere*» — net traps set in swamp ponds, «fenced off» by islands of reeds.

Land reclamation has transformed broad areas of the marshes into cultivable land. From the banks and spits of land, where canals divide into myriad branches and lose themselves in the sea between the reed beds, one can still admire a rare natural environment of water, sand, and rushes.



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THE ABBEY OF POMPOSA

The Abbey of Pomposa was founded about the 7th century on the Island of Pomposia, an area bound on two sides by branches of the Po in its delta — the Po di Goro and the Po di Volano — and on the third side by the sea.

At the time of the Abbey's foundation the area, though isolated by the surrounding marshes of the delta, enjoyed a healthy climate and abundant woodland, factors which encouraged the settlement of the Benedictine community and its subsequent expansion.

In the High Middle Ages the Abbey was a nucleus of culture, exerting both religious and civil power over a vast area. The prestige and prosperity of the Abbey continued unabated until environmental changes turned the area into marshland, rendering it first inhospitable and finally uninhabitable. The monks began to leave the island for the Monastery of San Benedetto in Ferrara in the early 16th century, finally abandoning it altogether in 1671.

Some of the monastic buildings have today disappeared, but the parts which re-



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main are of inestimable architectural and artistic value. The **church** as it stands today dates from the 11th century, the period in which the **bell-tower** (1603) and the atrium — the work of the architect Mazulo — were added to the original, simple basilica. The decorations on the walls are rare examples of great interest: maiolica bowls of Byzantine origin, cornices and friezes in two-coloured terracotta with plant and animal motifs, and sculptures with symbolic figures.

The inside of the church was completely frescoed in the 14th century by artists of the Bologna school and includes work by Vitale, the school's founder. The frescoes in the nave portray Old and New Testament scenes, while those of the arches show scenes from the Apocalypse; on the inside of the façade the Last Judgement and in the apse the glorified Christ with the Angels and the Saints.

The decorated floor is divided into three parts. The section in the Presbytery is a mosaic dating from the 5th century in the style of the Ravenna masters; the inlaid marble work of the central

section (11th century) with its geometric design reveals Venetian-Byzantine influence and contains, in the centre of the square, the eight-pointed star of Pomposa; the third section with its figures of animals also dates from the 11th century.

The walls of the **Chapter House** are decorated with frescoes of the Rimini school (early 14th century).

In the **refectory** the frescoes, dating from the second decade of the 1300's, portray the supper of San Guido, Christ with the Madonna and the saints and the Last Supper; these, too, are attributed to artists of the Rimini school.

The **Palazzo della Ragione** (Palace of Justice) today offers the visitor an unlikely perspective in its double loggia, the result of a somewhat over-imaginative restoration project of our own century; it was from this Palace, formerly connected to other buildings of the complex, that the Abbot dispensed justice and administered the affairs of the population.

From the right aisle of the church the visitor can reach the **Museum of Pomposa** with its valuable collection of sculptures, frescoes and archaeological exhibits connected with the Abbey's history.



COMACCHIO AND ITS «VALLI» HISTORICAL SKETCH

The earliest historical evidence regarding Comacchio dates back to the 8th century A.D. The image that emerges is that of a wealthy lagoon town surrounded by marshes (known as «Valli», with a harbour linked to what was then the largest channel of the Po. The town's economy was sustained by a mighty fishing fleet as well as by a thriving trade in sea salt—of which Comacchio was the major source in the north of Italy.

The breach of Ficarolo in 1152, after which the main channel of the Po shifted northwards, the ill-fated war with Venice (9th century), and the misgovernment under first the Este family and subsequently the papacy, all contributed to Comacchio's steady commercial decline.

In the seventeenth century, the town's rulers became interested in the marsh fishing trade, and also turned their attention to the town's architecture and land reclamation.

This recovery culminated with the Napoleonic treaty of 1797, which formally stated that the

«Valli» belonged to the people of Comacchio. This acknowledgment was repeated in 1868 by the Kingdom of Italy, with regard to the Commune of Comacchio.

The reclamation of the «Valli», which the Este family had initiated in the seventeenth century, progressively reduced their surface area from 1865 onwards. The Trebba, Ponti, and Isola «valli» were drained early on, but the process continued right into the 1950s and 1960s with the reclamation of Pega, Rillo, Zavolea and Mezzano. In their place, farming has been introduced.

COMACCHIO

The present layout and architecture of the town date back to the second half of the 17th century. There is a principal road axis running from East (Church of Saint Maurus and Saint Augustine) to West (Church of Saint Mary in «Aula Regia»). This is crossed by six waterways spanned by brickwork bridges.

The town's buildings, their fronts overlooking the canals, are arranged in rows separated by alleys from which a series of narrow lanes spread out like the teeth of a comb.

In the southern part of the town the *Treponti* (literally: «Three Bridges») (1634) and the bridge *degli Sbirri* (literally: «of the cops»), both designed by the architect Luca Danesi, are among the most beautiful features of Comacchio's typically lagoon architecture. Situated in the same area are the seventeenth-century Fish-Market, the eighteenth-century former Saint Camillus Hospital, designed by the architect Foschini, and the Bellini Palace, an aristocratic building constructed in 1865 now used as a museum and cultural centre.

The most important buildings in the city centre are: the Merchants' Loggia, built in 1621, an ancient granary; the Clock Tower, a nineteenth-century reconstruction of an earlier seventeenth-century tower; and the Church of the Rosary erected in 1618, which houses sixteenth - and

seventeenth - century art works.

Proceeding westwards from the centre one encounters the cathedral, built in 1659 to a design by the architect Cerutti on the site where the Chiesa Madre di San Cassiano had been erected in 708 AD.

In linear baroque style, the cathedral contains a statue of Santa Lucia in white marble with polychrome traces, dating from the first half of the fifteenth century, eighteenth-century works of art.

Further to the west one comes upon a baroque arcade, known as the *loggiato* «of the Capuchins», built in 1647, and consisting of 152 arches. This is situated alongside the Church of Saint Mary in «Aula Regia», erected in the seventeenth century, which houses a Crucifixion by Giuseppe Mazzuoli (known as «il Bastarolo»).

THE «VALLI»

Comacchio is surrounded by «Valli», a large lagoonal area of over 9600 hectares, offering a wide range of exciting views and a natural environment rich in aquatic and bird life. This area of marshes is famous not only for its many rare migratory and non-migratory birds, but also for its extremely numerous eels which spend several years in its mirky depths before returning to the Sargasso Sea spawning grounds.

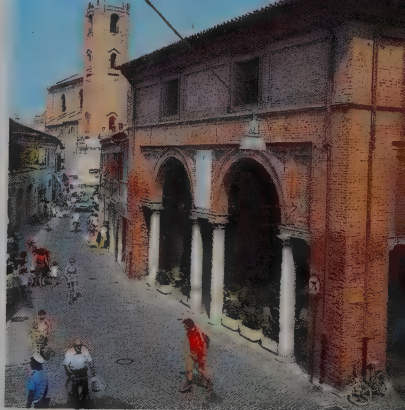
1. Dome of Comacchio seen from the valley; 2. Treponti.

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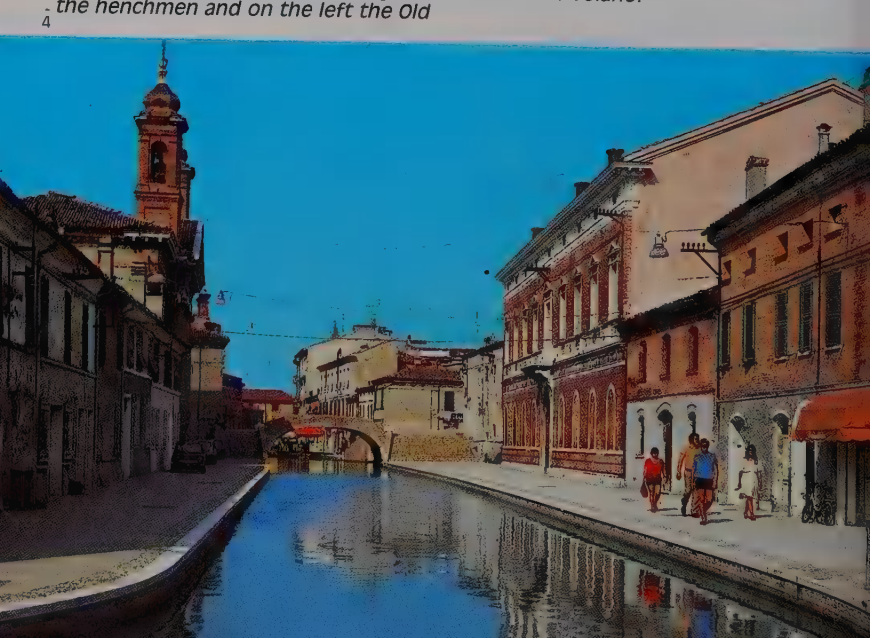


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Hospital S. Camillo; 5. Lekytoi (Greek vase) with red figurines; 6. Kelebe (Greek vase) with red figurines; 7. Seaside at Volano.



4

1. Tower of the clock; 2. Lodge of Merchants, in the background the dome; 3. Bridge St. Peter; 4. Via Agatopisto. On the right Palazzo Bellini, the bridge of the henchmen and on the left the Old



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SPINA

In 1922 and 1952, inside the lagoonal area, two vast Greco-Etruscan necropolises were brought to light. Then, in 1956, the town of Spina, dating back to the 6th century B.C., was discovered in the «Valle» of Mezzano.

The excavations, which are still proceeding at Spina, and the finds unearthed from the necropolises, which are now kept at the national museum of Spina in Ferrara, afford us an interesting glimpse of the city and culture of this ancient lagoon port, which disappeared in the third century B.C.

THE BEACHES

Ranged along Comacchio's sea coast, on the far side of the Via Romea — itself an ancient boun-

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dary between marshland and the sea — lie seven beaches or «Lidi», bathing resorts well-equipped to welcome visitors and holiday-makers. From south to north one may visit: «Lido di Spina»; «Lido degli Estensi»; Porto Garibaldi, a harbour at the mouth of the canal linking Comacchio to the sea; «Lido degli Scacchi»; «Lido di Pomposa»; «Lido delle Nazioni»; and «Lido di Volano», only a few kilometres from the Abbey of Pomposa.





CENTO

The history. The town of Cento, located 35 kilometres away from Ferrara, projecting towards the cities of Modena and Bologna, on the banks of the Reno river, represents an important historical, artistical, cultural and economic episode in the province. Of uncertain Roman origin, the first documents dealing with the town date back to 799, and here Casale Cento is mentioned as a boundary of a territory owned by Nonantola Abbey.

At the end of the 12th century the town consisted of a quadrilateral protected by a moat, with four entrance gates and divided into four quarters, under the domination of the Bishops of Bologna.

In 1502 Cento became part of the Este territory, as a dowry granted to Lucrezia Borgia by her father, Pope Alexander VI.

Once the irregular course of the Reno river was kept under control by turning it into a tributary of the Po near Ferrara, and once the lands north of the town were reclaimed, Cento became a flourishing territory, economically bound to the production of hemp.

Such a growth was largely due

to the peculiar old system of «participations» according to which the territories were periodically allotted in collective properties that ensured welfare and development to the population, and to the political authorities the recovery and control over marshy territories often flooded by the Reno.

Cento thus always enjoyed a certain autonomy and special privileges in duties, in the control of the waters and in arts.

After a relevant growth not only in the economic, but also in the literary, scientific and cultural field, Cento was eventually allowed to become a «city» by Papal bull of Benedict XIV on December 18th 1754. Many a personage, historians, men of letters, philosophers, mathematicians testify the cultural liveliness of this centre, from Alberto Accarisio (1497-1544) who wrote the first dictionary of the Italian language, to the historian Girolamo Baruffaldi (1675-1755);

-
1. Cento: Piazza del Guercino with Communal Palace (17th c.) and Governor's Palace or Palace of the Clock (16th c.);
 2. Guercino (and colleagues), «Virgin of the Carmel handing over the scapular to Saint Simon Stok and Saints», Cento, Art Gallery;
 3. Fortified Castle, second half of the 15th century.

but among all stands out the distinguished painter Gianfrancesco Barbieri called «Guercino» (1591-1666), a true leading artist: many of his works are still left in the town.

The centre of the town. The town is still well legible in its 14th-century layout.

At the crossing of the two main streets, which connect the old gates of the town, is the square. On to it stand the battlemented Governor's Palace with the clock tower (1502, rebuilt in the early years of this century) and the 17th-century Town Hall.

Down the main streets, characterized by a typical arcading system, are placed palaces and churches of remarkable historical and architectural value.

The most important among the churches is San Biagio's which, more than once rebuilt, dates back to 1045; in its baroque interior it is possible to admire the choir and a canvas by Guercino representing «Christ giving the keys to St. Peter». Some other churches are to be mentioned, the romanesque St. Peter's, the Church of the Rosary, designed by Guercino, and the Church of the Servants: these two have both works by Guercino inside.



Among the palaces we mention Rusconi Palace, Pannini House, along the arcades of Corso Guercino, with the characteristic wooden structures, Provenzali House, the Borgatti Theatre; just outside the girdle of walls stands the Rocca, rebuilt in 1460 on a former fortification of 1378.



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FERRARA

Legend:

- ① Castello Estense
- ② Cathedral and Cathedral Museum
- ③ City Hall
- ④ St. Dominic's Church
- ⑤ St. Paul's Church
- ⑥ Palazzo Paradiso and seat of the Ariostea Municipal Library
- ⑦ St. Francis's Church
- ⑧ Palazzo Estense S. Francesco called of Renata di Francia and seat of the University
- ⑨ Casa Romei
- ⑩ Church of S. Maria in Vado
- ⑪ Palazzo Schifanoia
- ⑫ Palace of Ludovico il Moro and seat of the Archaeological Museum of Spina
- ⑬ Biagio Rossetti's House
- ⑭ Church of S. Antonio in Polesine
- ⑮ Church of S. Carlo
- ⑯ Palazzo Roverella
- ⑰ Church of S. Maria dei Teatini
- ⑱ Palazzina of Marfisa d'Este
- ⑲ Arcispedale S. Anna
- ⑳ Palazzo Turchi di Bagno
- ㉑ Palace of Diamonds and seat of the National Picture Gallery
- ㉒ Palazzo Prosperi-Sacrati
- ㉓ S. Cristoforo alla Certosa
- ㉔ Palazzo Massari and seat of the municipal Museum of Modern Art
- ㉕ Palazzo Bevilacqua
- ㉖ Piazza Ariostea
- ㉗ Palazzo Rondinelli
- ㉘ Church of S. Giovanni Battista
- ㉙ Israelite Graveyard
- ㉚ Church of Gesù
- ㉛ Church of S. Benedetto
- ㉜ Ludovico Ariosto's House

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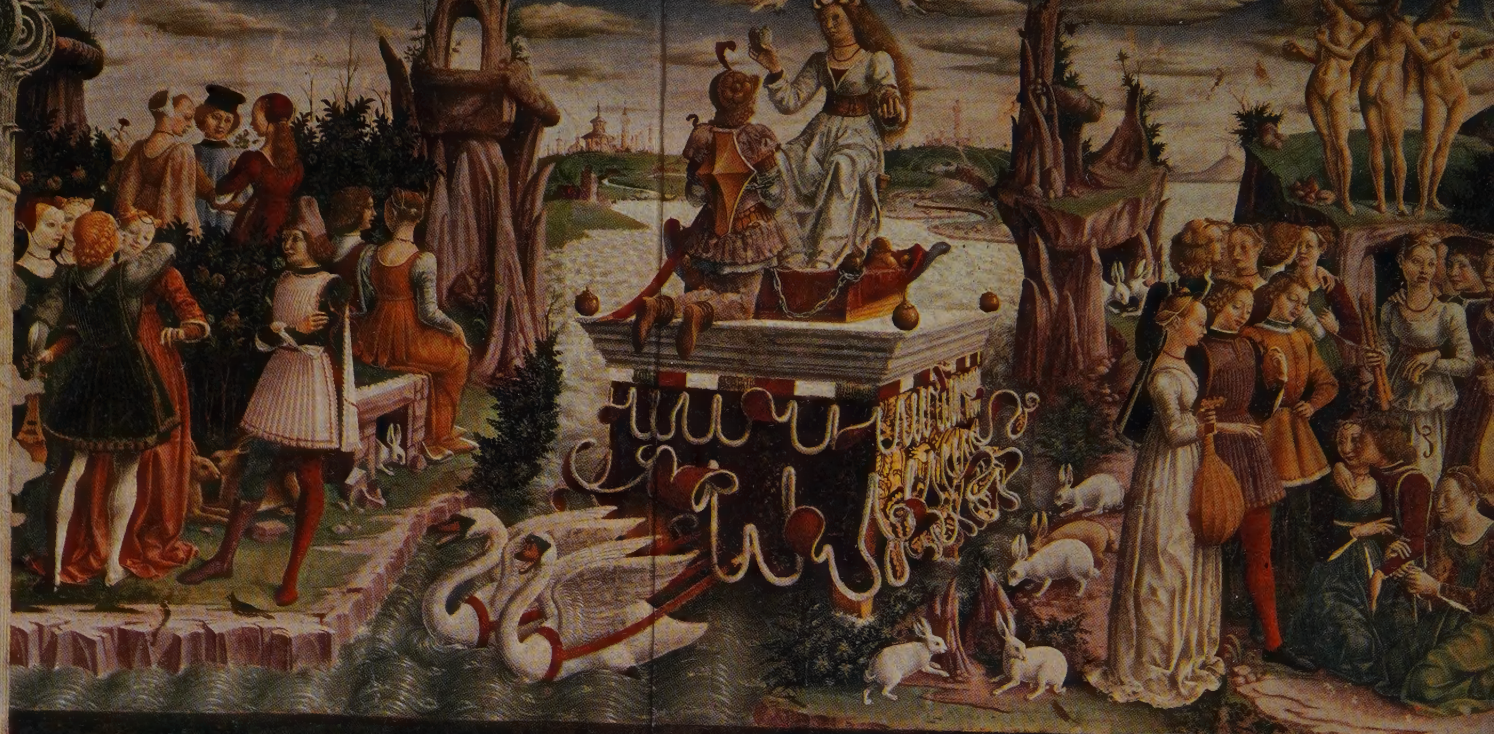
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